

Southern Living

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Charley Dickey's

Bobwhite **Quail** **Hunting**

Habits & Habitats • Techniques • Gear • Guns • Dogs



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Southern Living
Charley Dickey's
Bobwhite Quail Hunting



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To Billie, Bunty,
and Those Good Old Boys
Who Hunt Quail

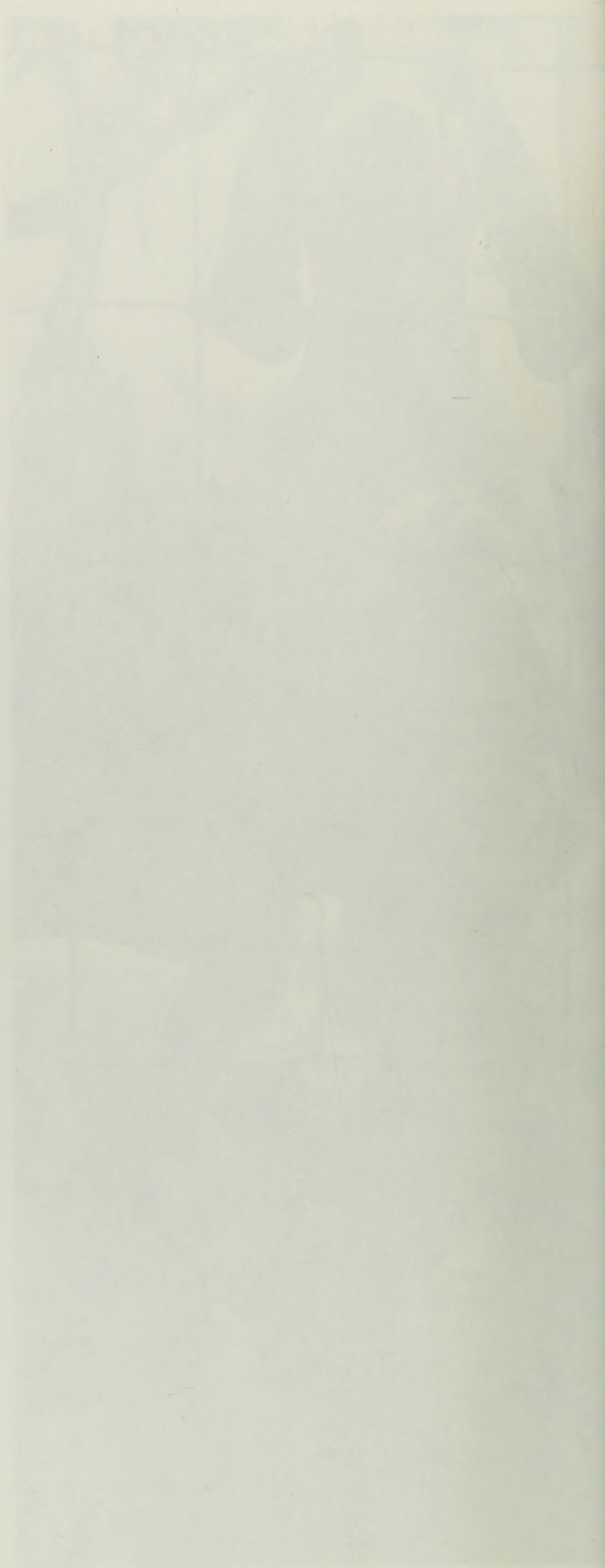




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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of the President of the United States since the year 1789. The names are given in alphabetical order, and the year of election is given in parentheses.

George Washington (1789)
John Adams (1797)
Thomas Jefferson (1801)
James Madison (1809)
James Monroe (1817)
John Quincy Adams (1825)
Andrew Jackson (1829)
Martin Van Buren (1837)
William Henry Harrison (1841)
Francis Pickens (1857)
Abraham Lincoln (1861)
Andrew Johnson (1865)
Ulysses S. Grant (1869)
Rutherford B. Hayes (1877)
James A. Garfield (1881)
Chester A. Arthur (1881)
Grover Cleveland (1895)
William McKinley (1897)
Theodore Roosevelt (1901)
Woodrow Wilson (1913)
Calvin Coolidge (1925)
Herbert Hoover (1929)
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933)
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953)
John F. Kennedy (1961)
Lyndon B. Johnson (1963)
Richard M. Nixon (1969)
Jimmy Carter (1977)
Ronald Reagan (1981)
George H. W. Bush (1989)
Bill Clinton (1993)
George W. Bush (2001)
Barack Obama (2009)
Donald Trump (2017)



Introduction

So you want to hunt quail?

I want to help you. I want to share my experience of more than thirty years of hunting quail from Florida to California, from Idaho to Cape Cod, and most states in between.

I will tell you how to get started, the equipment you need, and how to keep quail hunting simple. I will show you shortcuts to successful hunting, large and small points which will make your days afield more enjoyable. I'm qualified to do this because I've made most of the mistakes anyone can make, although I'm still finding new ways to be outwitted by quail each hunting season.

What I tell you I found out the hard way—in the field—but I have enjoyed the companionship of many experts who patiently helped me. Quail hunting is more than coming home with a limit of birds. All of my dearest and truest friends are warm people with whom I've shared the adventure of hunting a bird or catching a fish.

A swimming coach can teach a beginner techniques, but finally the student must go into the water and get his head wet. No book is a substitute for field experience, but I will lead you into the shallows and give you a gentle push.

There are six kinds of quail in the United States, plus the masked quail which biologists are trying to reintroduce in Arizona with birds trapped in Mexico. The bobwhite quail, with which this book deals, is mostly found east of the Rocky Mountains, although it has been successfully introduced in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

The California or valley quail is found in the West from Baja California to British Columbia. The mountain quail, which weighs up to nine ounces and is the largest of the quails, lives mostly in the same states but is usually found at higher elevations. The Gambel's or desert quail roams the arid or desert regions of the Southwest. These three species have plumes.

The scaled or blue quail has a crest tipped with white and is sometimes called "cottontop." It lives in the semiarid regions of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma.

The Mearn's quail—also known as Messena, Montezuma or harlequin—inhabits some of the mountainous areas of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. It is hard to find and not abundant.

Roughly, then, these species may be classified as the eastern or bobwhite quail, and the western quail, although there is some overlapping in Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado.

With the possible exception of the Mearn's quail, the other western species do not hold as a covey unit for dog work as well as bobwhite. In fact, when a bobwhite covey is behaving itself it is the best-holding game bird in America for pointing dogs.

Covey units of valley, desert, and mountain quail prefer to run rather than hold. They are stubborn about it, running ahead of the hunters and out of shotgun range. The hunting tactics, anyway you can manage it, are to flush the coveys and scatter the birds into low-lying ground cover so they will hold for pointing dogs or for hunters to kick them up. Putting these species in the air is the one time when a wild-running dog is of value. The scaled quail is the worst runner of all and hunters have invented a lot of uncomplimentary names for it.

While it's rare to get a covey shot at western quail, it's customary in bobwhite hunting for a covey to hold for pointing dogs until the hunters come up and stride in to flush fifteen brown missiles exploding for distance and cover. The covey burst is the greatest thrill in quail hunting. It's what shakes a hunter right out of his frame and creates addiction.

The bobwhite quail is the glamour bird of all hunting in the South, equally loved and coveted by the farm boy with a rusty, hand-me-down shotgun and the wealthy hunter using an expensive English double on his quail plantation of 20,000 acres farmed for bobwhite production.

The bobwhite is so greatly loved in the South that most people simply call it "bird." If a sportsman is going bird hunting, even little old ladies in tennis shoes know he is not after dove, grouse, or ducks—but quail! Depending on regional accent, the bobwhite is also called "bud," "partridge," "padidge," "patrich," or "pahdige."

Let's take a look at how you can outsmart Mr. Bob and beat him a good percentage of the time on his home ground. I'm going to tell you what to do and what happens most of the time when you hunt bobwhite quail. Let's call the dogs and go get a mess of birds!

Introduction

So you want to learn quilting?

I want to help you! I want to share my experience of more than thirty years of teaching quilt from the most basic to the most advanced. I will tell you how to get started, the equipment you need, and how to keep your learning simple. I will show you shortcuts to successful quilting and many other things which will make your quilting more enjoyable. I'm qualified to do this because I've made most of the mistakes anyone can make. Although I'm still learning, now I want to be equipped by quilt each learning year.

When I tell you I loved and the last one - the quilt - but I have enjoyed the companionship of many experts who patiently helped me. Quilting is more than making a quilt with a quilt of fabric. All of my friends and most friends were people with whom I've shared the adventure of learning a new or existing art.

A quilting class can teach a beginner to quilt, but Quilt is the student must go into the world and put his hand on the quilt. I'm not a quilt expert, but I will help you into the quilt and give you a gentle push.

I have one aim: to help you to quilt. I'll show you the most quilt which is the most useful. I'll show you the most quilt which is the most useful. I'll show you the most quilt which is the most useful.

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Life History of the Bobwhite Quail



The bobwhite quail is not named after a gentleman called Bob White. Its common name comes from the distinctive calls made by mated and unmated males in the spring and summer. The calls vary from "white" to "uh bob white" to "bob, bob

white," but most of the time it's a clear, cheery "bob white."

Its formal or scientific name is *Colinus virginianus*. It won't help you shoot any better to know this, but it's handy if you want to show off your knowledge of

quail. The genus name, *Colinus*, is derived from Spanish, apparently taken from Aztec and other Indian languages. The species name, *virginianus*, refers to where the bird was first studied for classification.

Taxonomists, feather merchants who like to study dead birds, don't agree on how many subspecies there are. Counting North and Central America, there are four species of bobwhite and these are divided into about thirty subspecies. For the United States, there are five subspecies: eastern bobwhite, *virginianus*; Florida bobwhite, *floridanus*; plains bobwhite, *taylori*; masked bobwhite, *ridgwayi*; and Texas bobwhite, *texanus*.

The Florida bobwhite, found in the southern half of the state, is the smallest one, weighing about five ounces. Quail in Wisconsin, Cape Cod, and other areas may weigh eight ounces or a little over. For most of its range in the United States, a bobwhite averages six to seven ounces.

As far as the hunter is concerned, bobwhite are colored about the same, except for the rare masked bobwhite in Arizona. Regardless of the subspecies and the habitat it's found in, quail coloration is superb camouflage which melts into the immediate surroundings. There are cases of unusual coloring in the wild, such as the Tennessee red, which has pigment problems. It's a true bobwhite, but it has reddish color replacing the brown of the standard bobwhite. White quail, and a few true albinos, pop up. Game breeders have developed blonds, silvers, and whites through selective breeding programs. Fortunately, these off-color quail don't survive when stocked or they'd mess up the beautiful bobwhite coloring it took nature more than a million years to develop.

For hunting purposes, we can take a Gertrude Stein attitude—a bobwhite is a bobwhite is a bobwhite. Although the subspecies may live in varying habitats, they handle for the dogs about the same, fly the same way, and use the same tricks to outwit hunters. I hunt quail in Florida a lot, where two subspecies overlap. When a bird flushes, I have never heard a hunter say, "There goes a *Colinus virginianus virginianus*," or "I missed that *Colinus virginianus floridanus*!" He either tells the dogs to fetch or hurriedly invents an excuse for missing.

However, the more you know about the habits of any species of game, especially its habits during the hunting season, the more successful your hunting will be. One of the hardest things to accept about quail is that they can't be stockpiled. There's

an annual mortality of 70 to 80 percent, *whether they are hunted or not*. A two-year-old quail in the wild is a senior citizen, and a four-year-old, a regular Methuselah.

The bobwhite is a sociable bird and can't stand being alone. In the spring, the coveys that make it through the winter start a gradual breakup, triggered by warm weather and the number of hours of daylight entering the birds' eyes. When the sun starts north in the spring, the mating season begins in southern latitudes and moves north with the sun. You may not think much of this system but the quail like it fine.

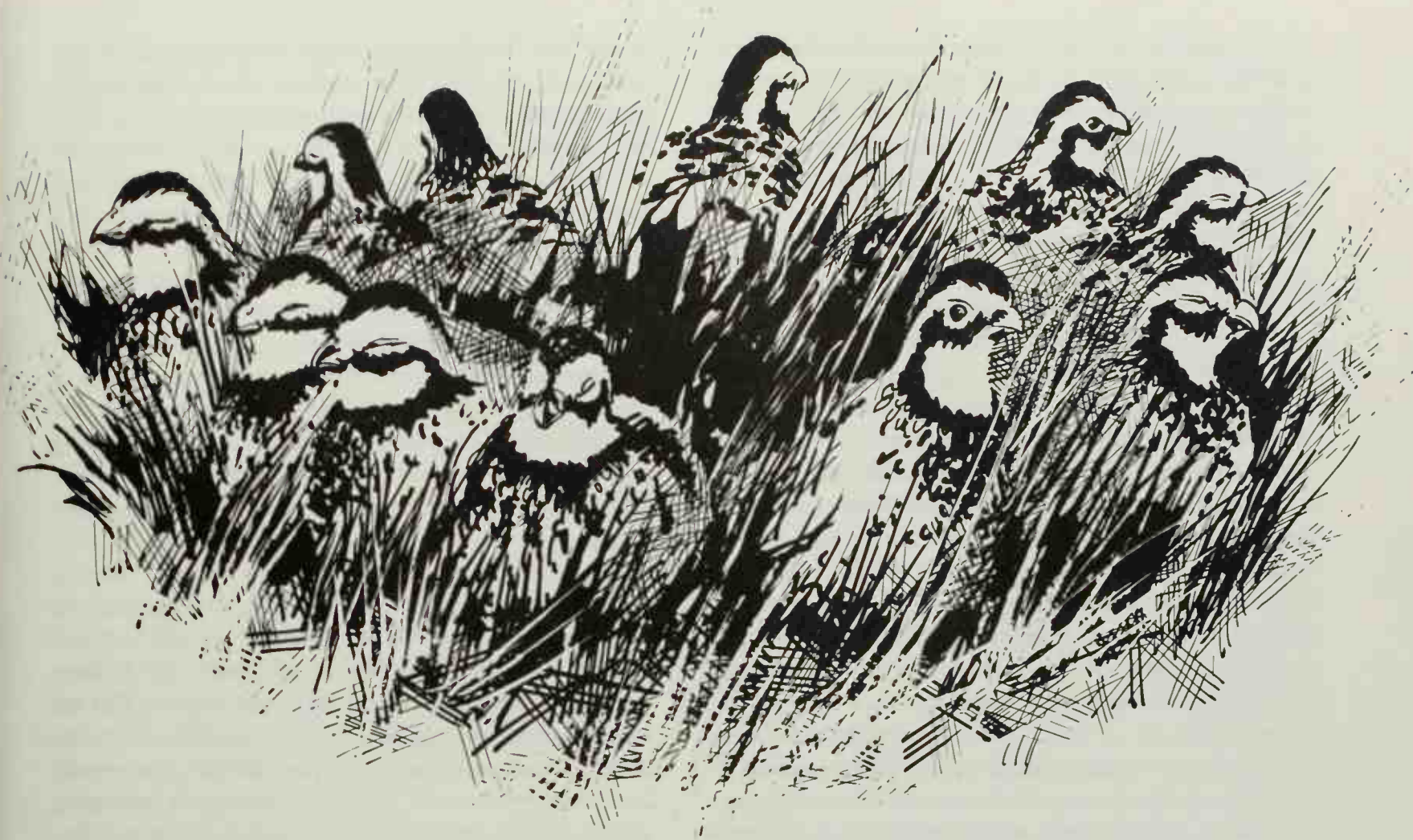
The attitude of the males is a sure sign that a covey is getting ready to break up. They show signs of hostility toward each other, despite having slept tail-to-tail all winter. The hostility may occur because there are 10 to 15 percent more males than females at this time of the year, although males and females are born in a 50-50 ratio. Biologists explain that nesting hens are more vulnerable to predators and farm machinery than are free-roaming males. Since the bobwhite is monogamous, and the wedded hens don't play around, that means a lot of cocks are going to be bachelors. It's no wonder they get hostile.

Males of most species of wildlife get huffy during the mating season, staking out territory and showing off to attract females. Bobwhite males spar and try to bluff one another. Since they don't come with spurs, there's no damage, except for a little injured pride. When the courting gets serious, pairs begin sneaking off together during the day, returning in the evening to roost with the covey.

When an engaged pair decides this is it, the twain leaves the covey permanently to set up housekeeping. The covey dissolves as more pairs, and lone-some bachelors, wander away. The hens, no matter how homely, always find a husband.

There's a common belief that coveys do not break up and breed in the spring unless they are shot into during the hunting season. This isn't true. When it's reproduction time, the birds hop to it. Bobwhite don't sit around trying to remember if their covey was shot at.

Obviously, the misconception started this way: A farmer saw a covey in a given range in winter, but that covey was not shot. The next fall there was still only one covey. He assumed the birds did not breed because there were no more birds the second



year. The fact is, the birds scattered in the spring and bred, but in the fall shuffle, when units looked for a winter range to settle in, there was only food and cover enough for one covey.

As long as the habitat remains the same, there will be only one covey there in the fall, regardless of how much lovemaking went on in the spring.

One of Charley's Laws states that farmers are not keen observers. It is easier to believe and repeat a rumor pappy got from grandpappy than it is to investigate. Further, a hunter will believe fascinating folklore before cold, statistical data every time. Not only will he believe it, he'll fight you about it.

Another of Charley's Laws is that bobwhite quail, given territory and nesting cover, will generally do all the multiplying necessary in the summer to fill good range in the fall. Charley's Law also refutes the belief that native quail inbreed. The birds scatter in the spring, shuffle in the fall, and coveys get mixed in the winter. Other than when they're paired, quail don't care which quail they're hanging around with just as long as they're with *some* quail. Bobwhite in the wild are too scattered to inbreed even if they wanted to.

The bobwhite cock is a devoted husband and father. Once paired, he doesn't trifle with other

hens and stays busy keeping bachelors at a safe distance. If the hen is killed after the eggs are laid, the male finishes the incubating and looks after the chicks.

Bobwhite quail nest on the ground. The male and female choose the site and share in nest construction—a small depression in grass or other dead vegetation. The bottom is softened with grass, leaves, or pine needles and roofed over with the same material. Because quail prefer to walk on bare ground, the nests are usually built in grasses near open ground, a path, or disked soil.

Within a day or two after the nest is finished, the hen starts laying. The average number of eggs per nest is about fourteen. Usually the hen lays one egg a day but she might take eighteen days to produce fourteen. When she lays the last egg, incubation starts and the chicks hatch on the twenty-third day. During incubation, the husband stays in the area but leaves the nesting chores to his wife. Roughly fifty days are needed for nesting, laying, incubation, and hatching.

A pair of quail brings off only one brood of young a season. Once the eggs are pipped and the chicks break out of the shells, the reproduction instincts of the hen are satisfied. She does not lay again that season.

One of Charley's Laws says that no matter what statement is made about bobwhite quail, someone will try to find an exception to it, even if he has to quit hunting for five years to spend his time in the library. If you wish to plow through all of the scientific literature on quail, you'll find a few isolated cases, usually with penned birds, where a hen brought off two clutches in a year. It's sort of like humans having sextuplets.

If eggs are destroyed before hatching, the hen will lay again. If something happens to the second batch, the pair will try again. If everything goes right, the first hatch is completed in late spring or early summer. If nests are repeatedly destroyed, a pair may bring off chicks as late as August or even September. Late-hatch birds may not be full-grown when the hunting season opens. Hunters call them "squealers" because when flushed they often make high peeping sounds as they fly. When sportsmen identify a covey of squealers, they pull their dogs off and quit shooting. Although a squealer on the wing at first glance may look like an adult, his body weight is not mature and the bird does not fly as fast or far as an adult or juvenile born in the spring.

Because young birds are found in the fall, there is a prevalent rumor that the bobwhite raises more than one brood a year. The misconception is compounded because young birds of different ages get mixed up when family units meet. A hen will readily adopt stray chicks or orphans younger or older than her own brood. If a hunter sees two sizes of birds with a hen and a trailing male, he may, understandably, assume the hen hatched twice.

Commercial quail farms, with programs of selective breeding under controlled lighting and other conditions, get more eggs from a hen and raise more chicks than is possible in the wild. When you're arguing with your hunting friends about what bobwhite quail will and will not do, be sure you're talking about the same thing—either native birds or pen-reared birds. You don't lose as many buddies this way.

Baby quail, which have just cut their way out of the eggshells and dried off, weigh about one-quarter ounce. They're hardly bigger than bumblebees. Few sights in all of nature are more warming than young chicks, still in natal down, beginning to make their way in the world and scampering to hide under mother's protective wings at the first hint of danger.

When the chicks are about a day old, the hen leads them from the nest with papa close-by. In a

week they'll be jumping to get airborne, and at two weeks of age they'll be making short solo flights. If the chicks survive to an age of 120-130 days, they will have the weight and flying ability of adults.

Somebody once figured that if one pair of quail successfully reared fourteen young and these paired and reared fourteen birds per pair...and the chain went on for twenty years, we'd all be hip-deep in quail. However, no matter how much hunters would like the idea, nature doesn't work this way.

Man is not the only predator. Some animal is always wanting to eat quail, even before they are born. Snakes, rats, and skunks eat the eggs. Young birds and adult birds are all tasty morsels for foxes, horned owls, some species of hawks, and house cats.

When you see a frail little chick in the wild, you wonder how this delicate ball of fuzz will survive all the hazards of childhood and grow up to be a big quail so you can shoot it in the winter. But no single predator species, or all combined, makes much of a dent in the quail population. Far worse, for which the quail has no defense, is poisoned grain put in fields to kill rodents. Insecticides, such as some used for killing ants, devastate quail. In addition, cold rains, floods, hurricanes, droughts, and prolonged heat during incubation all take their toll.

The quail has no defense against loss of habitat. Although adaptable, the bird cannot survive when his food and cover are destroyed. The loss of habitat because of certain agricultural and forestry practices, plus construction, has caused extinction in some areas. In addition, disease and parasites take a light percentage, and automobiles are a constant hazard.

Despite all these enemies and handicaps, a percentage of the birds live through the summer and grow into big birds—just about the number the habitat will support during fall and winter. Of course there are bad years when everything seems to gang up on the mated pairs and young birds. There are also good years when all the controlling factors are right and the birds flourish. Quail populations vary from year to year, but habitat—feed, cover, water, and territory for nesting, dusting, and loafing—is the main determining factor over the long haul. With a single pair of quail having the capacity to produce fourteen offspring, the bird has a quick bounce-back potential from low population years, except in its northerly and

arid fringe range, where the total flock count is never high.

Any species of wildlife with a high annual mortality rate, such as bobwhite quail, has a quick reproductive potential. Eggs and chicks can be flooded all summer in one area and the fall covey count will be low; but if conditions improve the next summer, the bird's numbers can bounce back—maybe to a peak for that particular location.

But enough of nesting and family raising. Let's get back to those lonesome males that did not get hens during the pairing. Maybe they'll find a bride the following year. Quail mate for a season, not for life as do Canada geese. With all the moving around in fall, winter, and early spring, a pair doesn't necessarily mate for a second nesting season. When a pair gets separated, it's instant no-fault divorce.

The bachelors don't give up easily. They try to establish territory and attract a female. They have no scruples about stealing another's wife. But despite their bluffing and strutting, they don't succeed. The male who first wins the hen is always able to hold and keep her.

The males do a lot of whistling the first two hours after daylight and the last two before sundown. Wildlife biologists don't clearly understand the relationship of quail to territory. This doesn't bother the birds though. Apparently, the wedded males whistle to signify their location and to indicate that they have staked out a hen and territory and don't want any help. The bachelor males whistle to signify their location, also, in the forlorn hope of setting up a territory and attracting a female. Any hen will do.

Several years ago, I lived on a fruit ranch in California and about fifty valley quail worked the border of the yard and almond trees. During the mating season, I could sit on the porch steps and with a wooden mouth whistle get the males so excited they'd fly in and land near my extended legs. It was the sexy, urgent hen call which caused them to go loco. If I remained still, sometimes a totally wild male would jump up on my legs and look the situation over. Once I had two males get in a fight over me. None of them ever figured out a way to overcome the mechanical problem involved, and nothing was ever consummated.

In late spring and early summer, some biologists and landowners go out at daylight and listen for whistling males. They plot the location of calling birds on a map, drive half a mile, and listen and

plot again. They do this for two straight mornings. They believe the count will give them an indication of how many coveys there will be when the hunting season opens. Other biologists, with just as many degrees, say the dawn patrols don't prove anything except how many whistling cocks there are on those particular two mornings.

One of Charley's Laws is that if there is anybody who argues more than hunters, it's wildlife biologists.

Summer is a time of plenty and easy living. Young quail are meat eaters, requiring a higher percentage of protein than a mature dog. Chicks seem to double in size each week during the first month of their lives and a minimum of 28 percent protein is needed for all of this construction. They get it from insects, both chicks and adults happily chasing the abundance which is part of summer. They also feed on a variety of greens, berries, fruits, and seeds.

Danger hounds the family unit; death so constantly hovers that survival is a way of life. A sudden rain pounds the chicks, the cold drops beating against the naked skin through the natal down. The hen frantically calls for the chicks to huddle under her shielding breast, but one is slow and confused. Pneumonia claims it. If the chick had been a week older, with new feathers oiled as a protective coating, it would have survived. Nature is filled with "ifs."

A Cooper's hawk darts low and clamps its talons through the soft flesh of a chick as it desperately runs for cover. A cow steps on a careless chick which has wandered from its mother. The family unit moves to a dirt road to dust and pick up grit which helps the gizzard grind food. A speeding car looms down on the loafing birds; the driver makes no effort to slow down. Two chicks are mashed, the others barely making it to the ditch. A fox stalks them at the woods' edge, anxious to vary his regular diet of rats and rabbits.

Through no choice of their own, the young and old are governed by the law of survival of the fittest. Nature does not care for the individual, only for the survival of the species. The young must learn quickly. The penalty for a mistake is death. To stay alive, the chicks must heed the warnings of their parents, develop their senses and strength, and be alert constantly.

One of Charley's Laws states that if it weren't

for predators, the bobwhite quail wouldn't be a game bird. Predators make and keep the birds wild and wary. If predators didn't make the birds fearful, quail wouldn't fly as sportingly in the fall for a man with a dog and a gun. Of course, man, the most efficient predator of all, plays a role in making quail wild.

The chicks learn early in the season to be wary. For the first three or four weeks of their lives, the young birds huddle under the hen at night, secure in her enfolding warmth. By the time they are too large to fit under the mother, their feathers have grown and they are better able to withstand the elements. They begin roosting in the pattern so typical of their species. They form a small circle on the ground with their tails together and heads pointed outward, ready for instant flight in case of an emergency. Later, in the covey, they put their wings together on cold nights and nestle tightly to form a blanket of warm air. If there's one thing a bobwhite hates, it's sleeping alone. But who doesn't?

The roosting spot is often in low broomsedge or weeds, ground level cover which is not dense, yet keeps the wind out. If there's overhead cover, it's sparse. The roost, which is never far from more protective cover, is selected so the birds can run or fly from it in a hurry. If the roost is not disturbed, the birds will use it for several days or longer.

The quail don't leave the roost to go to the bathroom. In the morning when the birds leave, a new roost has a circle of white and black droppings. It's like a doughnut. If the birds use the same roost for a long time, the center will fill in with droppings as the birds shuffle and the number changes. Then the roost is more like a disk, about the size of a dinner plate. Hunters, especially when working an area new to them, look for roosts. Fresh droppings are a dead giveaway that a covey of quail is nearby.

For a rough average, about fifteen birds roost together, but this varies from three to thirty. The roost circle or disk is indicative of the number of birds and some hunters have fun trying to guess from the disk's size how many birds are using the roost. If they flush a covey nearby, and can count the escaping birds, they are able to rate their accuracy as dropping experts. This generally leads to other interesting remarks.

A friend of mine in South Carolina once grew tired of his companion's constant bragging about how he had refined roost observation to such a pre-

cise science that he could tell exactly how many birds were present the night before. My friend finally visited a game farm and got two buckets of quail manure, went to the edge of an abandoned field they intended to hunt the next day, and poured a circle of quail droppings as large as a wagon wheel, a circle which in real life would have required more than a hundred quail to supply.

Early the next day, my friend maneuvered the expert to the roost so he would discover it. The droppings connoisseur was so discombobulated at finding the largest roost in the history of bobwhite hunting that he couldn't hit a quail all morning. In fact, he didn't want to hunt but wanted to go back to town and bring all his friends out to see the world's largest doughnut.



When young quail reach eight or ten weeks of age, they begin showing signs of coloration which distinguishes male and female. Coloring is distinctive when the birds reach fifteen or sixteen weeks. The male has a white streak on either side of the head which starts at the bill, continues over the eye and down the neck. The male also has a white throat patch. These same markings in the female are buff or light brown. The quail themselves never have any trouble telling a male from a female.

In a given covey, there is little difference in size between male and female of the same age. Biolo-



gists have weighed thousands of them and the male may average a couple of grams more, a negligible difference. As a general rule over the range in the United States, the bobwhite weighs less in the South than in the North; also, from West to East, the quail weighs a little more in the East.

Quail like to keep their feet on the ground. At ground level and on their eye level, they prefer open, not dense, cover, as they want to be able to see approaching danger. However, they do not wander far from escape cover. In summer, when vegetation is thick and lush, there is abundant handy escape cover. After frost, or heavy autumn rains, escape cover is not as widespread; consequently, the birds may shift ranges.

In both summer and winter, you may flush quail from dense ground cover or understory, but they probably ran into it when they heard you and the dogs approaching. When the covey flushes and scatters, the singles fly to protective cover, perhaps landing in high, dense wire grass or broom-sedge where the covey unit wouldn't go on foot.

For the bobwhite's daily routine—walking, loafing, feeding, grooming, dusting, picking up grit, lapping dew or sipping from a pond—the bird likes his feet on the ground and clear visibility for a considerable distance.

As long as a family unit's daily needs are met in summer, it doesn't ramble far. By preference, the bobwhite quail is a homebody and has no desire to see what's on the other side of the mountain. Yet, there's a friendly exchange of small talk and gossip when one unit bumps into another. As the units split, the juveniles may be mixed. Biologists report as many as five different-aged juveniles in a single family unit.

In autumn, when the nights begin to cool, the family units begin to wander, looking for a winter home which will provide the feed, protective cover, and roosting cover they need. I suspect they have territorial needs, although biologists have not yet determined this need for bobwhite quail, even in the breeding season when territorial instincts are strongest. As they wander, family units intermingle. If suitable winter range is near the summer home, there may be little movement. If winter range is two or three miles away, the birds will shift to it. When the birds get to winter range they settle into coveys. This movement of family units to form coveys for winter living is called the "fall shuffle." When a unit has decided on its winter home, it will seldom range more than half a mile

if living requirements remain adequate and undue hunting pressure is not put on the birds.

If a particular location has good winter habitat, a covey of quail will find it winter after winter. The same birds are not coming back year after year, although people like to think so. Quail simply like their comfort, and where there's a good home, a covey will settle into it. Hunters remember these winter homes because they know they can go back year after year and find a covey as long as the habitat remains about the same.

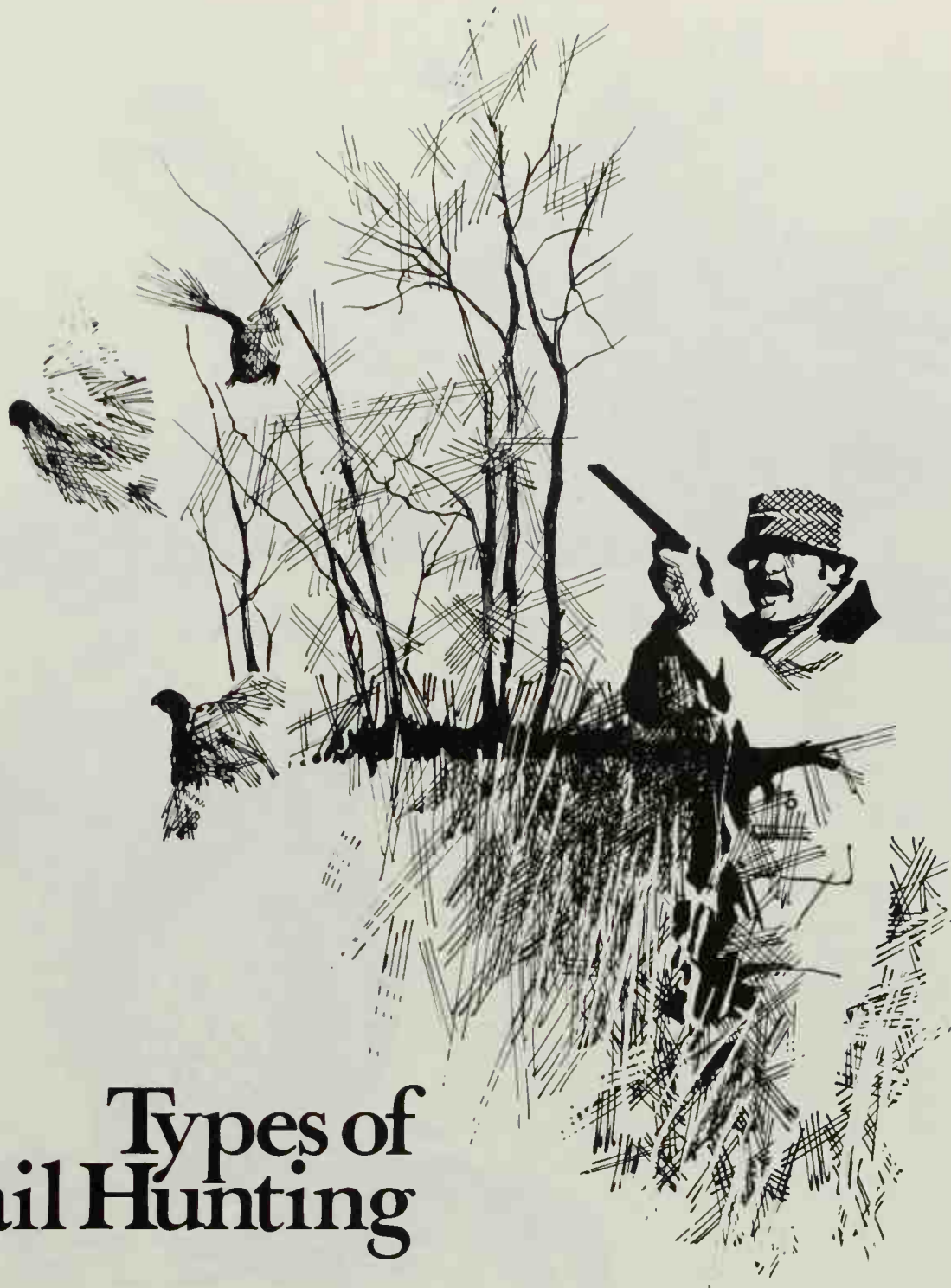
As summer wanes and cool weather approaches, the birds eat fewer insects and their diet changes mainly to seeds with a dab of greens. The covey goes about its daily living—escaping enemies, roosting together, preening, feeding, dusting, loafing, and scratching.

Birds that survive rain, cold, snow, ice, depleted cover, scarcity of food, plus hunters and other predators, will wake up some sunny morning in spring and there will be romance in the air. The cocks will get huffy, the hens will act indifferent, and the cycle will start all over again.

If you really want to learn a great deal about bobwhite quail and its management, there are two "bibles." The late Herbert L. Stoddard, a great ornithologist and pioneer in quail management, authored *The Bobwhite Quail: Its Habits, Preservation and Increase* in 1931. Unfortunately, the book, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is out of print. It's a collector's item in libraries and the homes of quail shooters. If you have a friend who owns a copy, you may be able to borrow it by leaving your trigger finger as a deposit. In 1969, Walter Rosene, a biologist who has devoted most of his career to studying the bobwhite, published *The Bobwhite Quail, Its Life and Management*. Rosene's book has much new data on quail. It sells for \$20 and if you cannot find it at a bookstore, you can order it from Rutgers University Press, Rutgers, New Jersey 08903.

Stoddard's book has 559 pages and Rosene's 418. One of Charley's Laws is that big books frighten people and they never get around to reading them. On the other hand, they will avidly read a brochure or booklet on quail.

Nearly every state game and fish department in the bobwhite quail range in the United States has published numerous reports on the bird. Most are available free or at a nominal cost by contacting the departments. A list of the addresses of the state agencies is in the back of this book.



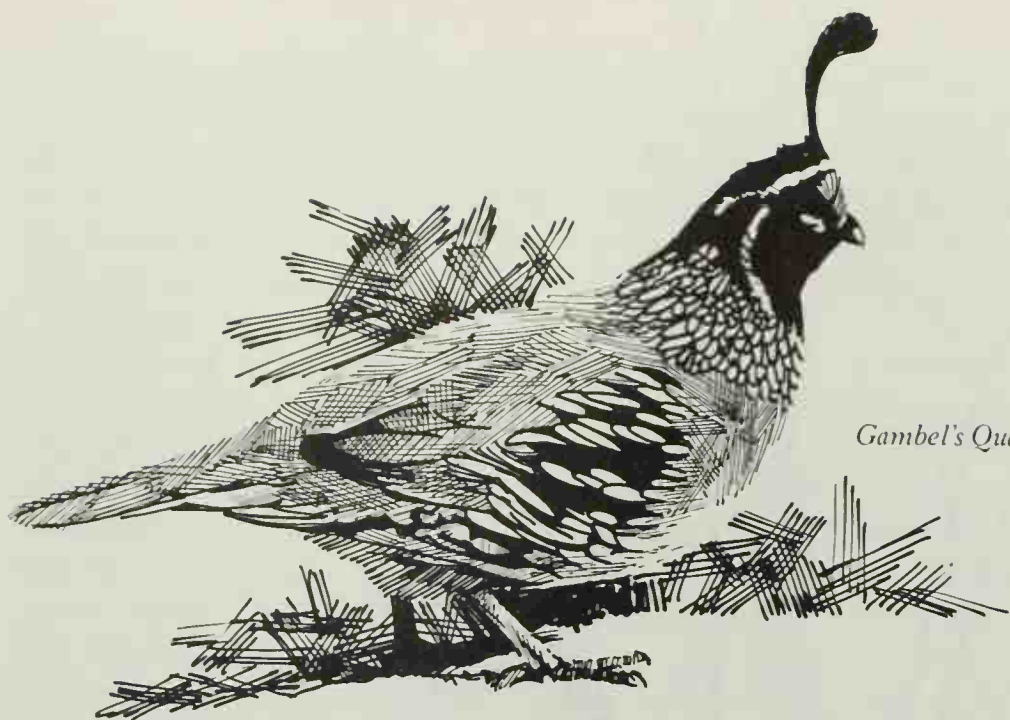
Types of Quail Hunting

There are three main types of quail hunting, or combinations of these. They are based on your transport in the field: horseback, vehicle, or walking. Most quail hunting today is a combination of riding a vehicle and walking. Even if you're mainly a vehicle or horse rider, you must eventually come down to flush a covey or shoot a single.

The type of hunting you plan to do most of the time determines the kind of dog you own, the vehicle you use, and your selection of other gear and accessories. Before you spend money for equipment, you should be familiar with the lands to which you have access, the sizes of the tracts and

their roads and trails, terrain, soils, cover, drainage, human and quail populations, climate, and altitude.

Knowing your territory is not as difficult as it sounds. An old-time bird shooter can size up the potential of a new area on a quick drive through, and at the same time tell hilarious dog and traveling salesman stories. Although he may not seem to be paying attention to the surroundings, afterwards he will be able to tell about how many coveys are on the land and where they're located. He may not remember his wedding anniversary, but he'll recall the location of every plum thicket, lespedeza



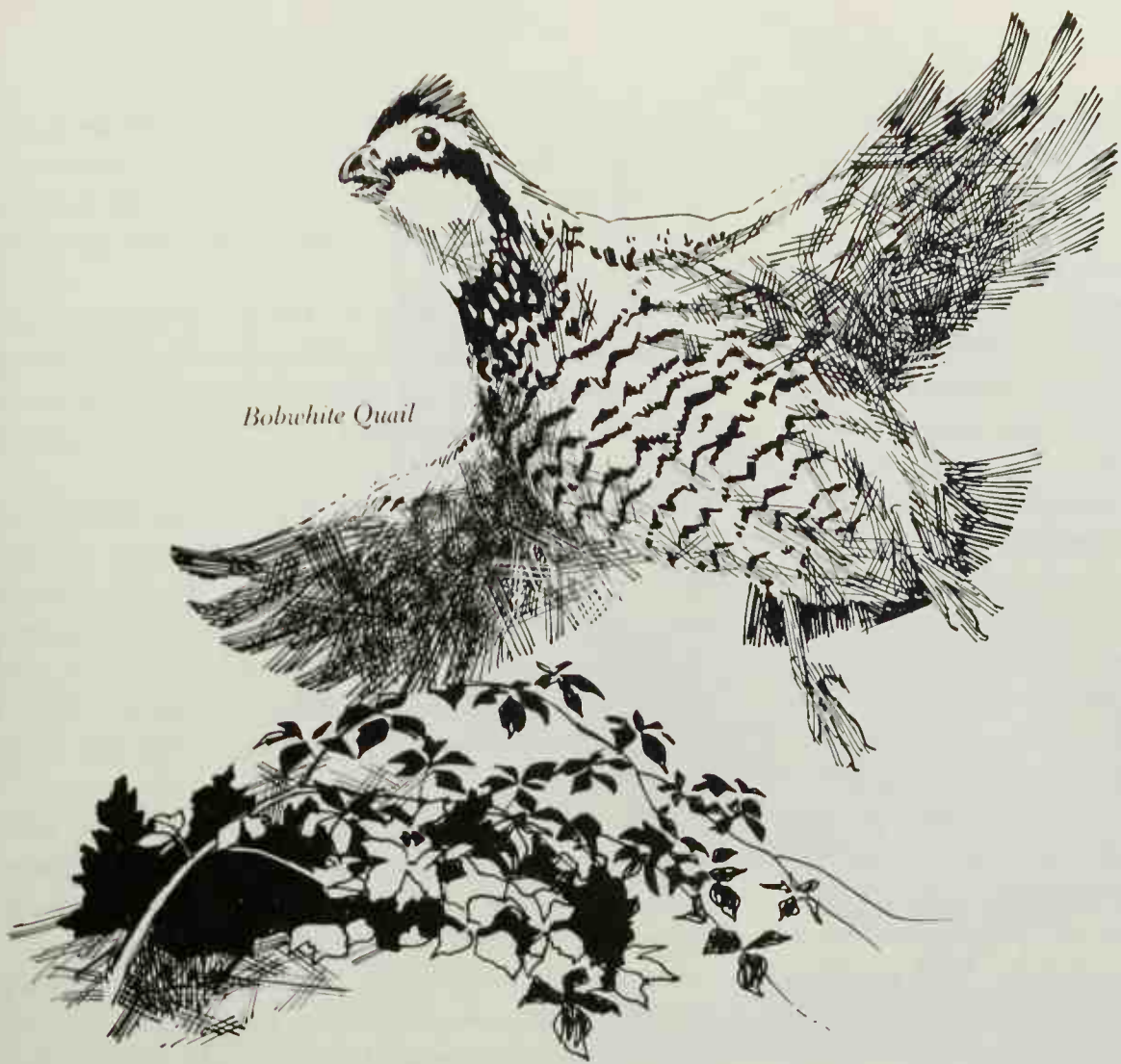
Gambel's Quail



Mearns's Quail



Scaled or Blue Quail



Bobwhite Quail



California or Valley Quail

patch, milo strip, and likely edge on the place. He knows exactly how he would hunt it—where he'd drive and where he'd walk. A keen observer can learn to do the same.

Except for special situations where you can hunt a half or full day on a large tract of land with few fences, horses are not worth the trouble. You spend more time unloading, catching, and getting on and off them than you spend hunting. If you have a rich friend who invites you to his ranch and has all the horses, vans, and equipment, that's fine. Enjoy it! If he is even richer and owns a plantation buggy with hydraulic springs pulled by a pair of matched mules, with your own driver, then consider yourself thrice blessed. Charley's Law states that you should always be kind to rich people who own quail land.

Many hunters have four-wheel-drive vehicles and land cruise all day behind wide-ranging pointers. In much of the flatland South, where hunters have access to large tracts of pulpwood or timber lands, they specialize in open woods hunting. It takes a big supply of dogs. You put two down and run them about an hour, depending on temperature, pick them up and put another brace down. Some hunters pool their dogs and take as many as twelve to twenty in special rigs for a day of cruising.

On large ranches in Texas and Oklahoma, hunters cruise the rolling farmland or sand hills, going afoot only long enough to shoot. In the cattle country of Florida, hunters ride the large pastures until they reach hammocks or other cover which houses quail.

If you live in a city or suburb, you may want to leave a jeep in the country with a farmer friend. You drive out comfortably in your car and then switch to the recreational vehicle or RV. It's no fun driving most four-wheel-drive RV's 50 to 100 miles to get to your hunting area; the ride back home at night is a slow drag.

In highly populated areas where the farms are small, spot hunting may be the only way you can hunt. The first spot is a small farm where there are two or three coveys. After you've worked these, you drive to another farm to which you have access. By hitting several spots in a day, you may find six to twelve coveys. Sometimes it's easier to spot hunt from a car than an RV.

To me, the most pleasant way of hunting is to take my excellent setters, a friend and his potlickers, drive to a farm of 300 acres or more, and

hunt on foot. Although we can't cover as much acreage as the riders, we don't go by as many coveys and singles as they do. Hunters who ride most of the time tend to hunt too fast. They also burn out a lot of dogs.

I hunt bobwhite quail for fun. I like to keep moving at a leisurely pace, watching the dogs quartering in the cover ahead. If I just wanted to see how much ground I could cross in a day, I'd take a flight on a commercial plane.

A great joy in my life is the two- or three-hour break in the middle of the day at some hidden spring shaded by a mossy live oak. That is when a can of Vienna sausage, rat cheese, and saltine crackers washed down with a bottle of pop or cold spring water becomes gourmet dining. Perhaps I have a moonpie for dessert and feed the dogs some tidbits.

How relaxing to wiggle a soft bed in the pine needles for a siesta, the dogs sprawled in the damp sand to cool their bellies, and the winter sun glowing just enough to ease me into dreamland.

I prefer to walk in the afternoon, poking along from covey to covey, watching the dogs and seeing what else is going on in the woods and fields. When the last covey is found in the cool of dusk and my legs are so tired I can just make it to the car—well, that sweet ache, with just a hint of muscle cramp, is almost as pleasant as the hot shower I'll luxuriate under. No matter what *Playboy* says, there are no sheets as welcome as those at the end of a long day of walking behind pointing dogs.

Where you hunt depends somewhat on the terrain. The presence of quail does not necessarily mean you will go after them with a gun. Their cover must be accessible and within shooting range, and coveys must be frequent enough to give you a reasonable amount of shooting. For instance, quail have been seen on top of Mount Mitchell in western North Carolina, the highest spot east of the Mississippi River. But no bobwhite hunter would fight the formidable terrain and cover, on foot or by jeep, with the small hope of getting one shot.

At the other end of the state, coveys are numerous around Lake Mattamuskeet, a few feet below sea level. The flatlands offer easy walking and the lush cover and grain fields support frequent coveys. Hunters can get to the coveys and follow the singles, except those which fly into the big swamps.

Pennsylvania has a low population of quail, so few that a hunter is allowed to take only four a day.



Mountain Quail

I would not go to that state to hunt quail. Of course, if I were hunting pheasants there and stumbled into a covey, I would be grateful.

One has to hunt in a location or state where there is a reasonable chance of flushing several coveys a day; also, where there is some chance of following the singles. I like to look at scenic wonders and be thrilled by the fall colors, but if I don't put some birds up, it has not been a successful hunting day. I don't need to tote a six-pound shotgun all day to commune with nature. Each hunter works out his own hunting philosophy, but few continue unless they kill something.

Once I spent two beautiful June days driving slowly along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia. The number of bobwhite males whistling in the little clearings near the mountain crests amazed me. Frequently, I stopped and whistled back, as if I were a male bent on invading their territory.

It was all the fun I wanted from those quail! I would not, under any circumstances, have gone back to hunt them in the fall in that difficult terrain where I might stumble and climb all day without a shot. On the other hand, I would have welcomed an invitation to hunt on the valley floor

on either side, where rich farm land was broken with grain fields and patches of cover. The conditions meant easy walking and a fair number of birds.

In the unbroken stretches of pine lands in southeast Georgia, I would not go hunting on foot with the hope of finding wood coveys. I would not find many, as they would be too far apart. I could not cover enough ground to get much shooting. However, if I rode a four-wheel-drive RV and had a supply of dogs, I could hunt enough area to flush eight to twelve coveys in a day.

In areas of intense farming, like those found in parts of Missouri, Iowa, or southern Indiana, the owner, fearing crop damage, might not allow you to hunt if you intended to drive all over his farm. But if you told him you'd hunt on foot, he might readily give you permission.

Charley's Constant states that if a hunter does not have access to land with a fair number of birds, with conditions which allow the hunter to get himself in shooting range, he will soon take up another weekend hobby, such as raking leaves.



A Place to Hunt

There is not enough good quail land to take care of the number of people who wish to hunt. What's more, there never will be. That means somebody gets left out.

There are about 98,000 quail hunters in South Carolina, according to recent statistics of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department. In their projection of hunting pressure to the year 2000, they predict the same number of hunters despite the rapidly growing human population. The state is not growing more land and will be lucky to maintain their current production of quail. When the supply of a game species does not meet demand, or when it's hard to find open land, a lot of people turn to other kinds of hunting or

to fishing. Sometimes it causes more children.

As a rough estimation, let's say that five coveys in the morning and five in the afternoon make good hunting for two average hunters. Using 15 as the number of birds per covey, that means they see 150 birds in a day. That many birds in the air should keep them happy, whether or not they can hit them. But suppose by hunting hard on the land they have access to, they can only find two coveys in the morning and one in the afternoon. That's when they'll take a look at their investment in time and money and perhaps stay home on the weekends and watch football on television.

Seven coveys of quail per 100 acres is prime hunting land, much better than the average shooter has

access to. If it averages a bird per acre, the chances are that somebody is leasing it and posting it. Also, when there's a bird per acre, somebody is probably spending money for quail management.

If you live in the city and hunt on land belonging to someone else, you should be happy if that land has three coveys per 100 acres. If you and your buddy have access to 1,000 acres with a total of thirty coveys, or 450 birds, you could each take 100 per season without hurting the basic breeding flock for the following spring. This is a lot of hunting and shooting.

Of course you may not have exclusive use of the land and others may be shooting the same coveys. Two hundred acres of prime land are not enough because you'd soon be cutting down the numbers too much; also, you don't want to pound the same coveys on Saturday that you shot on Friday.

Where you live influences the amount of land to which you have access. Obviously a hunter who lives in Washington, D.C. would have trouble finding access to 1,000 acres of land in Maryland and Virginia. But perhaps he is so glad to get out of there that he's happy to have access to one farm of 200 acres with four or five coveys. On the other hand, a hunter in a small town in rural Mississippi might have access to twenty farms and all he has to do is show up and say, "I've come to hunt on you."

About 7 percent of America's population live on farms. Close to 80 percent live in suburbs and cities, and the remainder in small towns. As a result, most people who want to hunt have to hunt on public land or land belonging to someone else. This creates competition.

If you are thinking of taking up quail hunting, don't spend any money on equipment until you have access to land with quail. If you are an experienced hunter with access to a few thousand acres, enjoy it while you can. The average family moves once every five years. I've moved a dozen times in the past thirty years and each time I've had to start all over finding a place to hunt. It's rough! Nevertheless, it can be done—if you want to hunt badly enough.

In the bobwhite range in the United States, about 75 percent of the land is privately owned and the other is owned by various governmental agencies. Let's discuss some of the possibilities of land owned or managed by the government.

A beginning hunter or one new to the state should first start with the state game and fish department. (Their addresses are in the back of this

book.) Write to the director. If you don't know his name, simply address the envelope to "The Director." People seem to respond better when a letter comes down from the boss. You can expect prompt and courteous service. All of the personnel are paid from funds received from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. State game and fish departments are supported by sportsmen, not by public tax revenues.

Be specific in your letter and don't ask them to send you everything the department has on bobwhite quail. For instance, say that you live in Podunk City, that you want to hunt quail within a radius of 100 miles, and then ask for information on any public lands, plus maps, and a copy of the current regulations on quail hunting. Many state agencies are understaffed so it may take two or three weeks to get a reply.

If you are planning a trip to another state, write well ahead of the hunting season. When I do not get a reply in three weeks, I send a telegram to the governor. This has always produced an immediate, greatly detailed, response.

Incidentally, a state fish and game department cannot tell you to go to Farmer Brown's in the northeast section of Cherokee County. Farmer Brown owns the land and the state has nothing to do with it. The state owns all of the game in trust for all of the people, but Farmer Brown owns the land. Hunting on private land is not a right. It's a privilege Farmer Brown may or may not grant.

Many Southern states have excellent programs of managing lands for public hunting that are owned by the National Forest Service, the military, the forest products industry, and other large land owners. These are usually called wildlife management areas. In some cases, there is food and cover development and in others, the state simply manages the land during the hunting season. The WMA programs are administered by state game and fish departments. They do the patrolling and help with forest fire protection. They also do wildlife research.

It is a good public relations program for the companies or agencies that actually own the land. Timber and pulp companies, which own millions of acres of land from Virginia to Texas, have found that they don't get so many unexplained forest fires when they open their lands for hunting and fishing.

Not all of the land is quail habitat—some of it is more suitable for deer, turkey, or squirrels and



Old rail fences mean cover and a place for quail to roam. The bobwhite is mostly a bird found in agricultural country. He might fly into the woods at the foot of the hills to escape hunters, but you wouldn't normally find him on top of the hills.

some, more like a biological desert. But most of the WMA tracts have some quail habitat, and many have excellent areas.

Florida has the largest acreage in the WMA program, with nearly 5 million acres. North Carolina has almost 2 million; South Carolina, nearly 2 million; Mississippi, 1½ million; Georgia, over 1 million; and Louisiana, 850,000 acres. Texas has only ¼ million acres, and the hunters in that state have to depend mostly on the hospitality of ranchers and farmers. In fact, an increasing number of farmers in Texas expects to be paid for the right to trespass on their land for hunting.

Most of the states with WMA programs charge a small fee above the cost of the regular hunting license. The money is used for habitat development and management, and for the leasing or purchasing of additional land.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission, using money from hunting license fees, has purchased

more than 1 million acres to be managed and held in trust for hunters. Other progressive game departments are doing what they can with available funds to provide for the long-range future of hunting.

If you live near the headquarters of your state game commission, or a regional office, it will be well worth your time to pay that office a personal visit. Most of the biologists and information specialists are hunters themselves and they'll help you get started with a general area to hunt.

Most military bases have active conservation programs. Where there is extensive land, the base may have a policy which allows the public to hunt.

The Tennessee Valley Authority and the Army Corps of Engineers own lands around their reservoirs, plus many islands in the lakes, which often have good wildlife habitat. Free information on these public lands is available by writing: Director of Information, TVA, New Sprinkle Building,

Knoxville, Tennessee 37902; and Chief of Public Affairs, Army Corps of Engineers, Forrestal Building, Washington, D.C. 20314.

More than 90 percent of the land owned by the major corporations in the forest products industry is open to the public for outdoor recreation. Information on these lands is available from state game departments.

State and federal agencies, as well as the privately owned pulp and timber companies, are anxious to get along with the public. But it's a two-way street. They ask that hunters obey the regulations and not abuse the lands. Also, they'd like a pat on the back from hunters once in a while. It only takes a few minutes after a hunt to write and thank them.

Once you have located some lands to hunt, by all means scout them before the quail season opens. Look for likely coverts and get to know the back roads.

As most of the land in quail country is privately owned, most of us depend upon the generosity of farmers and ranchers for much of our hunting. There is no reason a farmer should open his private land to you—no more than you would let strangers hold a picnic in the front yard of your suburban home. However, rural people, who live close to nature, are the salt of the earth. They are friendly, cooperative, and anxious to do anyone a good turn, if hunters will only let them. Some hunters have horribly abused the privilege of hunting on private land and as a result, many farmers now forbid access to strangers, or perhaps anyone.

One afternoon I drove into a farmer's yard in Tennessee to ask permission to hunt quail. Before I could get out of the car, the farmer came running up, shouting, "You can't hunt!"

His face was flushed, and it was obvious he was angry with me, although I was a total stranger. I smiled at him and opened the car door. I knew if I could get out and get my feet on the ground I'd be in a better tactical position. I was anxious to impress him with what a jolly good fellow I am. It was obvious he needed a sympathetic ear, and I asked him why he was angry.

He said, "This morning a hunter saw a squirrel run in the top of a dead tree. He set the tree on fire to run the squirrel out and the fire spread all over my woods lot. The next hunter shot one of my cows and the next one after that killed a hen. I ain't having any more hunters on my land."

"I don't blame you," I said, and got back into

my car.

Before I could start the engine, he looked at me long and hard and said, "You're by yourself, ain't you?"

"Yes, just me and this old dog."

"Well, maybe you could go on and hunt."

"No, thanks," I smiled. "This ain't your day. Sure as heck I'd shoot one of your mules."

He grinned for the first time. "I got some hard cider out to the barn."



Well, I didn't go hunting any that afternoon, but I made a friend and patched up some farmer-sportsmen relations. Now I didn't tell you this story to show you how noble and clever I am. It was my responsibility to try to repair the damage done by inconsiderate hunters. Buying a shotgun doesn't make one a sportsman. It's only common sense that each hunter has a duty to look after the welfare of his chosen recreation. One of Charley's Laws is: Don't ever be a sonuvabitch on somebody



This covey flushed out of a strip of milo where it had been feeding. A covey is never far from escape cover.

else's land. They's bars in town for that.

It isn't easy for a metropolitan hunter to get to know farmers. They simply don't run across one another in the normal course of business, civic affairs, and recreation. This means you have to make a definite effort to cultivate the friendship of farmers. They get more hunters than they need, so they won't be looking you up.

Then how do you get to know farmers and absentee landowners? You look *them* up!

First, take a state road map and study it. If you live in a large metropolitan area, eliminate the nearby countryside. The land which is easy to get

to is either leased or posted. Go to an isolated area well off the main highways. At the same time, don't select a county so far away that it'll require a long drive every time you want to go hunting. You are looking for farms in reasonable driving distance from your home and in areas not likely to be visited often by the competition—other hunters.

When you have narrowed your selection to a county, drive to the county seat, look up the highway department, and buy a county map. It will show the secondary and unpaved roads not shown on state road maps.

The second step is to look up the conservation



If you develop a pointer like this one, it'll save you a lot of fence climbing.

officer or game warden for that county or area. There is no better source of information. I have never understood the tendency of hunters and fishermen to avoid wildlife officers, unless they have guilty consciences.

No one knows the hunting situation better than the local wildlife officer. Outdoorsmen themselves, they are usually warm and friendly people who want to be of service. While a wildlife officer cannot give you permission to hunt on private property, he'll give you some good leads—such as the location of fair quail land where the traffic is not heavy. He may even give you the names of farmers he knows who are usually receptive to polite hunters. I've often had wildlife officers invite me back to hunt with them on their days off.

Scout farms from your county map well ahead of the opening of the quail season. By calling on a farmer then, chances are he hasn't had any recent unpleasant scenes with hunters.

The direct approach is best. Simply drive to the farmer's home and ask for the man of the house. Farmers' wives rarely give permission, or they may tell you they don't allow hunting. If the farmer is working in the lower forty, ask his wife if it's okay to drive down and talk with him. Naturally it's best if you catch the farmer when he's not too busy.

I think it's helpful to wear a tie and be neat. Introduce yourself to the farmer, tell him where you are from and that you would like permission to hunt quail on his land when the season opens. Before you stop talking, tell him that you'll abide by any house rules he has.

I've found that it helps if I take my wife along. At least if he doesn't like my looks, he'll be pleasant and polite in front of a lady when he says "no." It's also harder for him to say "no."

If you and your wife drive up to a farmer ahead of the season with one dog and no shotgun and ask permission to run the dog, he'll likely say yes. I'm trying to get my wife to do the asking, but so far I haven't succeeded. Anyway, if he lets you run your dog, this is the opening you're after. It gives you a chance to know the farmer. All farmers like dogs of one kind or another.

Your basic goal is to make a sincere friend of the farmer—I mean the year-round, not just during the hunting season. One of Charley's Laws says that in any friendship each party expects something from the other. It may be something tangible or it may be warmth, admiration, kindness, or friendship.

When you're looking for a place to hunt, you have to make the first gesture and be at your brightest, sunniest best. I don't mean any phonus-bolonus stuff. The farmer will catch you every time.

If the farmer lets you run your dog before the season, you're in a good position to ask him if he'd like to hunt behind the dog, or if you can come back and hunt.

On your first visit to a farmer, be sure to get his full name and mailing address. Write him a nice thank-you note when you get home, even if he turns you down.

I used to hunt with a guy in Missouri who always bought a sack of bananas when he was in an area new to him and looking for a place to hunt. When Carl would drive up in a farmer's yard, he'd holler at the first kid he saw and give him a couple of bananas. As other kids approached, he'd give them bananas. When the lady of the house came out, Carl would offer her a bunch of bananas and then he'd peel one and start eating it. By the time the farmer got there, everyone was standing around nice and friendly, eating bananas, and it was hard for the farmer to turn Carl down. Now, I don't look on this as buying a hunt for a sack of bananas. Carl is a friendly fellow and this was his way of making a friendly overture.

It's hard to do something for a farmer who lets you hunt. To begin with, the farmer, living in the country as he does, with land with birds on it, already has the best of life. There isn't much he needs.

Farmers don't get a lot of personal mail. They'll enjoy a note from you after a hunt and at Christmas-time. Find out what magazine he or his wife would like and order a year's subscription. They'll remember you twelve times a year.

After any hunting trip, always ask the farmer to

share your game or accept all of it. He'll rarely take it, but if he does, you should clean it for his wife.

A couple of seasons ago, I drove up to a Texas ranch house with Steve in his oversized camper, towing a trailer with a jeep on it and four dogs yapping in the boxes. An elderly rancher came running up, yelling, "Get off my land!" I couldn't blame him. We looked like we were tooled up to sweep through his land like a swarm of locusts.

I climbed down from the cab as if I hadn't heard him. I told him I'd flown a thousand miles to hunt, which was the truth, and that we were desperate for a place to camp and hunt. After listening to the rancher tell how his land had been abused for so many years that he finally closed it, I told him if he'd let us stay, he could inspect our camp-site and we'd hunt only where he said it was okay. He finally relented and pointed to a grove of trees where we could park. By the time we got the camper leveled off, it was midafternoon. But the ranch was thick with bobwhite and the cover was low. Steve and I stopped shooting when we had eight birds each.

There was a lot of daylight left and while Steve worked on dinner, I dressed the quail. I took all sixteen birds up to the rancher and gave them to him. The tears welled up in his eyes and for a minute I thought he was going to break down and cry. He said it was the first time a hunter had ever offered him a piece of game. He trotted out a bottle of bourbon and told me his life's story. The old man lived by himself and suffered a horrible case of loneliness.

Steve was angry when I got back to camp. He had planned to cook six quail for our own dinner, but I had given them all away. He stomped around for awhile until I told him that if he didn't calm down I wouldn't let him hunt on "my" land the next day. Anyway, when we got ready to leave, I drove up to the rancher's house and asked if he wanted to inspect our camp site. He just smiled and said, "No. You boys hurry back."

Find out if there are any errands you can do for the farmer's family in your home city. Once you get to know him, invite him and his wife for a visit when they come to town. Take them to dinner or to a sports contest—not because you owe them a favor, but because you sincerely want to get to know them better. If your efforts at friendship are genuine, the farmer will invite you to a country barbecue or dance and you'll meet more farmers. Charley's Law says that all humans need friends. If you're

going to be a quail hunter, you might as well have friends who own quail land.

This is not a book on public relations, but if you're going to depend on other people who own land, it's a good idea to study Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

In the long run, I think farmers may have much to gain from those of us who live in cities and suburbs. The farmer is a diminishing part of the population, so his political clout in state capitals and Washington isn't what it used to be. Farmers need political allies and votes, and they don't have many places to look, except to the 55 million Americans who hunt and fish.

Meeting farmers or finding land can be particularly difficult if you are a beginning hunter or have recently moved to a new city. Your best bet is to become the hunting partner of an experienced local hunter. Since he knows the ropes, he can save you weeks of time. If you are lucky enough to find a hunting partner, you must never commit the cardinal sin; that is, never go back to your partner's favorite hunting areas on private lands on your own or with someone else without getting an okay from your first buddy.

It's hard to meet a good hunter who knows his way around who doesn't already have one or two steady buddies. He's not really looking for someone to share acreage he worked hard to get. One way to find a desirable buddy is to join local sportsmen's clubs and make friends at the sporting goods stores. Sooner or later you'll make a contact.

Another point to consider in locating land on your own or meeting a hunter to become buddy-buddy with, is who in the city has contacts with farmers. Some starters are county agents, agricultural extension workers, farm equipment dealers, and veterinarians. Vets who work with farm stock always have access to more land than they can ever hunt. When a vet goes out and saves Old Bossy, the family cow, he never has any problem about coming back to hunt.

Physicians also have good contacts in the country. The ranchers have to come to town to get healed. Some city realtors and lawyers who handle business for farmers also have an entrée. The county tax assessor is a good man to know. Certainly any farmer wants to be nice to *him*!

There are more people who want to hunt than there is open land with good shooting. One of Charley's Laws states that if a man wants to hunt quail bad enough, he'll find a place.



Quail Dogs

"He hath eaten me out of house and home."
Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, II*

It's possible to hunt quail without pointing dogs, but few try. One could argue that a Benevolent Providence put bobwhite quail on this earth to provide the perfect bird for dogs to point. However, it's the other way around. Pointing breeds have been selectively bred to develop the ideal quail dogs.

The bobwhite quail, most of the time, holds for pointing dogs. With head held high the dog winds the birds; or, with nose close to the ground, he trails the birds by scent. When the dog gets a warm, fresh scent, he points. This indicates to the hunters that the dog has found game, and it's not far in front

of the dog's nose. The hunters walk boldly past the dog, flush the game, and shoot.

The pointing dog has a better nose than man and can run faster and farther. The dog finds the game and the man shoots it; the dog finds and retrieves the dead bird, and the man puts it in the bag. The two are a team. Neither by himself can bag a quail through sport hunting in a reasonable amount of time.

To hunt quail, you must have access to pointing dogs. Depending on your particular circumstances you may wish to own your dogs, hunt with companions who have dogs, use a neighbor's or the



Bobwhite quail hunting is teamwork between a pointing dog and the hunter.

community's dogs, rent a dog from a professional handler, or hunt with a farmer who keeps dogs.

If you plan to do a lot of quail hunting, sooner or later you'll want to own two or more dogs. In the South, there is a saying that, in his lifetime, every man is entitled to one good bird dog and one good wife. Nothing ruins more hunts than sorry dogs, and nothing makes a hunt more enjoyable than dogs with style and manners.

Although man and dog hunt as a team, one must be the boss. The man has the larger brain and should start off being the boss, even before he sees the dog he will own. You begin with your selection of a breed and by your choice of an individual. If fortune smiles on you, the dog will not try to be boss too often. But he will try!

The qualities in a dog you buy, whether trained or to be trained, should depend on what kind of hunting you expect to do most of the time and where you plan to keep the dog.

If you'll be hunting mostly from a vehicle and covering a lot of ground, choose a big running dog with courage and endurance. He must have a keen nose and be a good winder. He should have a lot of white on his coat so that you can keep up with his ranging.

If you'll be hunting mostly on foot, choose a dog with shooting ancestry. You will not be able to hold in a pointer or setter from field trial stock, and will spend more time chasing him than hunting quail. He will damage your disposition. The field trial pointer or setter, selectively bred for generations to range far after quail, has get-up-and-go in his genes. Even a hunter on horseback has trouble keeping up with them.

The foot hunter or even the vehicle hunter in rolling terrain and woodsy cover needs a dog bred to work close to medium range, quartering back and forth ahead of the hunters. An experienced shooting dog will adjust his range to you. If you're



It adds greatly to the pleasure of hunting if you train your own dogs, starting when the pups are forty-nine days old. A pedigree pup doesn't guarantee a good dog, but it puts some odds on your side.



The dog's nose indicates where the birds are hiding. With this pointer, there's no doubt that a single is only a short distance ahead.

on foot, he'll stay 25 to 200 yards ahead of you, depending on his training. If you get in a vehicle, he'll range out 300 or 400 yards.

The dog's range is important in the field—you should always be able to see what your dog is doing. He's the bird finder. How do you know if he has found birds if you can't see him? Oh, I know all those old stories about Rover disappearing for three hours and when finally found he was on point, faithfully holding all that time. I've looked for missing dogs for two hours and found them back at the car taking a nap or in the farmer's yard chasing chickens.

The size of the farms you hunt has a bearing on your selection of a dog. If you hunt small farms, a rangy pointer will be over on somebody else's land before you get your gun loaded. If you're a spot hunter, you need a close-working dog, one you can put down near an anticipated covey and let methodically work it out.

A regular hunting buddy who already owns trained dogs could have a bearing on your selection. If his two are close workers, you might want yours to range farther. Some dogs develop into outstanding covey locators, and others become specialists in finding singles. One of each is an

ideal team for foot hunters.

A hunter lucky enough to live in the country can kennel any breed with no particular problems; however, the city and suburban hunters have limitations. An apartment dweller does well to keep one. The suburban hunter with a sizable lot and understanding neighbors perhaps can accommodate two or three.

To keep a hunting dog under conditions where the dog cannot be given a daily run is inhumane. If he must be kept in a small kennel, the owner should have access to acreage where the dog can be taken for a run. Even so, the owner must frequently take the dog to acreage where he can stretch out.

Yet another solution for the suburban dweller is to keep one or two dogs in his home and let them roam free the same as all the neighborhood pets. Of course, he must choose the right strain and breed. A big rambunctious dog in the suburbs will create problems with the neighbors. You cannot give freedom to a pointer from field trial stock and own him for long. He'll go tearing out of the yard and collide with an automobile four blocks away.

Regardless of what some professional dog trainers say, you can have a dog that is combination family pet and hunting companion. A dog is much like a child; he knows how far he can push each member of the family. But if consistently trained and handled, the family pet can be a good hunter in the field.

Dogs have a tremendous capacity for adapting to the ways of man. They have instincts and perceptions man can barely understand. If a dog is born with genes which compel him to hunt, he has no problem converting from a family pet one day to a briar-busting hunter the next.

A dog that lives in your home gets to know your every mood. Sometimes I think they can tell the night before that you plan to take them hunting the next morning. I've had setters that slept at the foot of my bed. Morning after morning, as I dressed to go to work, they would pay little attention to me other than to give me a morning greeting. But the morning I reached in the closet and brought out a gun case or my hunting boots, the dogs suddenly came to life, dancing around in lively anticipation and showing me their eagerness to go. Perhaps the smell of leather triggers them. I'm not sure how they do it, but an old canine hunting friend can instantly tell the difference between a business



With every muscle quivering, this rawboned pointer leans into his point with his nose, like radar, homing in on fresh quail scent.



When a pointer puts on a show by coming in with a double-header, you're glad you paid his room and board for so long. This pointer is what's known as a "brag dog."

suit and a pair of hunting britches.

The metropolitan hunter, because of his circumstances, may have to train a combination family pet and hunting dog. The number of dogs he can keep in his apartment or yard is limited. He wants a hunting dog and the kids want a family pet. A hunting dog is the perfect compromise.

By keeping a pointing dog as a family pet, you can do a better job of training it than a professional trainer. There are two main reasons. First, you and the dog will get to know each other better. Second, you will spend more time with the dog than a professional could.

A combination hunting-pet dog has one big disadvantage: he may not have the natural ability to become a satisfactory hunting dog. By the time you find out, the kids and mama love him. You want to give the dog away and start with another pup, but when the subject is casually brought up, your wife and kids look at you as though you're a hard-hearted ogre. Man, you've got a problem! And Charley doesn't have a law to cover this one.

Let me strongly emphasize that you should obtain a dog that has the best chance of meeting your requirements. Analyze your situation. Don't ask someone else what breed or strain you should get. He will tell you alright, but the choice will be based on *his* circumstances and prejudices. Investigate different breeds and strains. Talk to hunters and professional trainers. But learn all you can without taking their statements as gospel. And finally, when you do buy a dog, select a breed and strain that has the best chance of meeting *your* needs.

Let's look at some of the qualities a pointing dog should have. The ability to find birds is the dog's most important quality, as his main job is to locate and indicate quail. To do this he must have an instinct to hunt and a good nose. These two qualities are inborn. There is no help for a dog without them.

Pointing is a quality that depends somewhat on ancestry. Some dogs are born with strong instincts to point; as pups, they point on the first quail they smell or on a quail wing dangled along the ground from a line on a fishing pole. Other pups do not have as strong an instinct to point, but if they have a nose and desire to hunt, their pointing can be improved with training.

Endurance, necessary in a dog, is part breeding and part training.

Speed varies with the dog and its desirability depends on the range. Some dogs are bred for



It doesn't take an expert to realize this pointer has style, that extra spark of flair and class which is icing on the cake.

speed so they can cover a lot of ground in a short time. Others have ancestors that were slow, methodical workers. A dog's speed depends on inheritance, with a little influence from training. Generally, if a dog is a slow runner at eight months of age, he'll be a plodder at six years of age. That's his natural way of doing business. If you hunt on foot, you want a dog which does not range wide, but covers the ground ahead of you; a lightning-bolt pointer of field trial stock may disappear from sight, or maybe forever.

Courage keeps a dog going. He must be willing to bust through cover, swim icy water, and work in heat and dust. He is born with a basic courage, but early associations greatly influence it. He should be encouraged and trained to bravely handle basic field conditions. If mishandled, he will lose courage. If his master is a road hunter, the dog may hunt that way; if the master himself busts the brush and briars on foot, the dog will be more inclined to do it.

A biddable dog reacts favorably to commands, a necessity in the field. Some breeds are more biddable than others. Some dogs seem to be born ornery, but the environment, people, and training the dog is exposed to the first six months of his life are key factors.

Style is a matter of the owner's preference. Some owners do not care what the dogs look like or what they do as long as they find birds and indicate where they are. Other hunters enjoy the style of their dogs more than shooting quail.

Style is the quality that makes your heart do a



The author accepts a bobwhite from his five-month-old English setter, Willy. The orange and white pup pointed his first quail when he was three months old. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)

bump and grind and your knees shake. It's performance with élan. It's dash, boldness, spirit, grace, and something potlickers don't have.

To see a spirited pointer, head up and proud, race from covert to covert, suddenly wind game and slide to a grinding halt, lock on point with tail held high and muscles quivering, will shake you to the marrow of your bones.

Styles in dogs change. One hundred years ago, dogs were stylish on point if the tail went out in a straight line from the back. Later, field trial dogs were bred and trained to hold their tails at a 45-degree angle above the line of the backbone. In recent years, the expected angle has increased to 90 degrees, or more, with the tail curving back toward the head.

Most of a dog's style comes from his breeding, but handling helps. Inept handling can take style out of a dog.

A dog is born with all the intelligence it will ever have. Unfortunately, owners of pointing dogs do not selectively breed for intelligence. All the owner of a pup can do is try to get everything he can out of a dog's intelligence by proper handling, training, and experience.

A pointing dog should have a good disposition. You can't have a dog that bites your friends or beats up their dogs. Some breeds have better dispositions than others. (Of course, aggressiveness varies with individual dogs in a particular breed.) The early environment and associations with dogs and people are the determining factors in a dog's disposition. Most dogs can be taught that fighting isn't appropriate when they're on a hunt.

Affection is a quality to look for if your hunting dog is also to be the family pet. Size is also to be considered. If your dog is to be kept in the home, you might want a pup from a small Brittany strain rather than from a large pointer strain. Where much of your hunting cover is dense, a large dog might bust through it better than a small one; also, you might keep better track of the larger dog.

Nobody ever said it was cheap to own bird dogs. When economy is a factor, a small Brittany eats less food than a big setter. If you use motels, you may find the management is more likely to let you in with a small, affectionate setter than a huge, rambunctious pointer.

Color is another factor. In the field you must see your dog. Blaze orange collars help, but they are not enough. Most of the dog's coat should be white, the most visible color under all field light-

ing conditions.

Long or short hair is a characteristic to consider in the dog for both field and home. The coats of long-haired dogs pick up cockleburs, sandspurs, and all sorts of stick-ems which have to be removed. Your wife may become enraged when you bring old Zev home matted in cockleburs, not to mention shedding, and ticks, much harder to find on long-haired dogs.

There is a common belief that in sections of the country where the hunting season is cold, long-haired dogs are preferable because they tolerate the weather well. In the South, it is a popular belief that short-haired dogs stand the heat better than long-haired ones.



As far as the range of the bobwhite quail in the United States is concerned, I don't think the length of the dog's hair makes enough difference in the heating and cooling system to matter. There's not much physiological reason to believe a German short-hair is any colder than his setter running mate in Illinois; nor do I believe the Brittany in Mississippi gets any hotter than the pointer alongside him.

I accept the fact that professional trainers in the Southeast will tell you a setter can't take the heat like a pointer, but they will never give you a physiological reason.

In much of the best quail land, there is an abundance of greenbriers, catchaw briars, blackberry brambles, and other sharp things which scratch up hunters and dogs. It is often necessary to penetrate these thorny jungles to locate quail or to find those that were shot and fell there. It is a common belief that dogs with long coats do this better than dogs with short coats.

Don't forget your own prejudices when selecting a dog. If you like a dog's coat in lemon and white rather than liver and white, then pick one to suit you. You're the one who has to look at him.

The dog you obtain should be pleasing to your eyes and have the confirmation expected of the breed. Random crossing of breeds does much mischief. A "drop," a cross between a pointer and setter, may be a capable pothunter, but your hunting friends will make pungent remarks about his looks.

Registering a dog, or getting papers on him, is often misunderstood. The fact that a dog is registered guarantees nothing about its qualities. Papers purport to show the immediate ancestors of a dog. Papers *imply* that the puppy has been selectively bred and careful attention has been paid to lineage. Few breeding kennels employ a geneticist.

No dog breeder in the world can look at a three-week-old pup and guarantee how the dog will turn out, any more than a pediatrician can foretell whether a child will be president or a bum. Health and intelligence can be determined early, but the final outcome cannot be foretold.

If you buy a pup with papers, it simply means you are getting the odds on your side. Genes are great practical jokers. Bluebloods can throw idiots, and dogs of dubious lineage can throw geniuses. However, the odds are that the bluebloods will produce more competent dogs than those having haphazard ancestors.

Papers are helpful when buying or selling a dog. The seller gets more money because his papers show ancestry, and the buyer's chances of getting a usable dog are increased.

If you purchase a trained three-year-old dog you've seen work in the field and you are happy with it, intend to keep it, and do not plan to breed it, then papers are of no value to you. The problem arises two years later when you decide to breed the dog or sell it. Without papers, the dog's sale value is less, and no owner of a registered bitch wants him for a stud.

Before buying a pup, regardless of any papers,

see the dog's parents and grandparents hunting in the field if at all possible. This increases a little your odds of ending up with a dog you'll like. Seeing is always better than ink and paper.

When acquiring a dog for hunting, *never, never* get one out of bench show stock. These dogs are bred for coat, conformation, and beauty. Show people don't breed for the qualities hunters want, such as nose, instinct to hunt, boldness, and pace.

When obtaining a pointing breed, always find out if the dog is from shooting stock or field trial stock. There's a big difference, especially in range and speed.

Now let's discuss the dangerous subject of dog breeds. Sometimes it leads to shooting and cutting scrapes. The breeds are discussed generally and do not take into account the many exceptions. For instance, if I say that English setters make better combination hunting-family dogs than pointers, don't write to me about some pointer you knew in childhood that was great at both. All I'm talking about is what happens most of the time. I don't really care what breed anyone else hunts with as long as he is happy.

POINTER *"His better doth not breathe upon the earth."* Shakespeare, *King Richard III*

The pointer is a natchell-born, brush-busting, rip-snorting, rough-assed, quail-hunting machine. Most of the pointer strains in America were developed to hunt quail. Put a pointer down in a field or woods and he can no more keep from hunting than breathing.

He's all instinct to hunt and has a better nose than any pointing breed. He has strength and endurance. The pointer doesn't give a damn what he's doing as long as he's hunting. It doesn't matter if it's hot, cold, snowing, or if there's a hurricane. If you don't watch him, he'll run himself to death in hot, dry weather.

Pointers are not exactly biddable. But they are spirited, and trainers like them because it's easier to "bring down" a spirited dog than "bring up" a shy dog. They are able to withstand attention from leather straps without getting complexes. They also have the reputation of maturing early for hunting and are considered "fast starters."

Pointers have been inbred for qualities other than intelligence. Their IQ's are low. This doesn't mean they don't learn from hunting experience; they're just more machines than thinking animals.



This English Setter has style. Head and tail held up, he indicates a covey is straightaway.

Pointers will fight each other in the kennel or in vehicles going to and from a hunting area. But once put down in the field, they are too interested in hunting to fight. If disciplined, they learn quickly not to fight around hunters. They are not aggressive toward humans, but they can be provoked. A human is something which feeds them and takes them hunting. Of course the pointer knows his master, but he shows little regard or affection; he's low in personality and warmth and cares less who owns him.

The sizes of strains and individuals vary a great deal, some unnecessarily large. They will eat anything and all you'll give them.

Their coats have short hairs, and the basic color is white, broken up with either black, liver, or lemon spots and blotches. The kindest thing I can say about the eye appeal of pointers is that they are uniformly ugly, but have great spirit, style, and class.

The pointer is not a good choice for living with a family in a city apartment or a suburban home. As a family pet, he is best described as rambunctious and a clod. It's a breed highly developed for running. There are not many situations in the suburbs where it is fair to the dog to keep him. The pointer is a country dog.

ENGLISH SETTER (Does not include Irish or Gordon setters.) "*The grass stoops not, she treads on it so light.*" Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

The English setter is the only pointing breed which can compete with the pointer in finding bob-white quail. The setter wins some field trials and shooting dog stakes, but the pointer dominates.

The breeding of the setter has not been as intense or controlled as the pointer. The setter has a strong



The Brittany spaniel, the only spaniel bred to point, is becoming more popular across the nation as a hunting dog and family pet. The close-working Brittany is an ideal dog for hunters who walk for bobwhite quail; he's also a good retriever for quail, doves and other birds. (Photo credit: American Field.)

instinct to hunt and a keen nose. It has endurance and learns to pace itself. The setter generally is not the speedster the pointer is, and can be brought in easier for medium-range work and a closer quartering of cover. He has the courage to take on whatever conditions are found afield.

A setter is anxious to please humans and is reasonably biddable, although many trainers believe it is a slow starter. Some trainers use the word "stubborn." There is a common saying that a pointer must go through a refresher course each fall, but that once you break a setter he is trained for life. Also, they often last for more hunting seasons than pointers.

Setters have a high emotional quotient. When a setter has that glow of internal fire, no other dog comes near his style. As he goes joyfully to work, with proud head and tail held like a knight's lance, he is a symphony of grace and fluid motion. The gallery at a field trial will cheer for him, although

most own pointers. He's a long-haired beauty and perhaps the word which describes him best is "merry." Watching a good one makes you feel cheerful.

The setter is the most intelligent of the pointing breeds. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say he is the most adaptable to the ways of humans. He perceives your changing moods before you yourself are aware of them.

The setter is the biggest con artist in the entire dog kingdom. He greets you with a merry wag of his tail, fawns on you, acts as though he idolizes you, but if his ownership changed each day he would care less, and show the same affection for each successive owner. He pays his debt for room, board, and hunting privileges with affection. He showers each member of the family with loving attention. He gives you the adoration you wish humans would give you. It is easy to become a setter's victim.

There is considerable variance in size, ranging from monsters developed by some New England grouse hunters to scrawny runts favored by certain field trial owners in Texas and Oklahoma. Some of the dainty little bitches will fool you. They're tough as nails. On a hot day, I've seen them run a giant pointer right into the ground.

A small or medium-size setter is cheaper to feed than a large one. They're also easier to handle in the house and the back seat of a car.

Setters have long hair, sometimes silky; feathers on their legs and tails are long magnets for cockle-burs. The basic coat is white with freckles and blotches of black, tan, lemon, or orange. Some are tri-colored, black and tan on white. Setters are the most beautiful of all pointing breeds.

With his happy disposition, the setter is the best choice for the city or suburban hunter who wants a combination family pet and hunting dog. The setter also fits well with country living.

BRITTANY SPANIEL *"A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience."* Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The Brittany is the only spaniel bred to point. It cannot compete with the pointer and setter in finding bobwhite quail. To expect it to compete would not be fair.

The nose and instinct to hunt in Brits is not as uniformly keen as in pointers and setters. However, selective breeding programs are improving these qualities. The Brittany is catching up increasingly in popularity.

The Brittany was developed to work close to hunters on foot, quartering back and forth. It bounds with great energy at a steady pace and in a hunt covers a lot of ground without wearing down.

Like the setter, the Brittany has a high emotional quotient. If handled too roughly at an early age, they may become shy. They require more patient handling than pointers. However, a spirited Brit has great courage and will bust brambles or icy water as readily as any pointing breed.

The Brittany is biddable and responds best to gentle but firm handling. It's a willing student, developing well the first year.

The Brittany's tail is docked. For this reason, to a pointer or setter man, the dog never looks stylish on point. This spaniel does not seem to have the bold assurance and intenseness of pointers or

setters, but it does a competent job of pointing. All breeds of dogs have a different ancestry. A Brittany will give his best, but it's not fair to expect him to be a pointer or setter.

The Brittany has average intelligence and the spaniel affection. It is a perceptive dog that adapts well to humans. I think of it as a "friendly, jolly dog," but some of the males get nippy. Charley's Law says that whenever you get ready to whip any breed of dog, first get a good hold on his collar. This saves you from having to take tetanus shots.

Brittany spaniels are smaller than other pointing dogs and eat less. Unfortunately, some breeders, in an attempt to compete against pointers, are developing large dogs for speed and range.

The Brittany spaniel is a long-haired dog with a white coat ticked or splotched with liver, orange, or lemon.

The hunter who walks or spot hunts finds it a fine dog, and its popularity as a family-hunting dog continues to grow. Smaller strains are ideal for apartments and any strain is adaptable for the suburbs. Because the Brittany is essentially a close-working dog, hunters on big acreage may take one or two along for single work. They use pointers or setters as covey dogs, but when singles are scattered, they put down the close, efficient, ground-covering Brittany.

GERMAN SHORT-HAIRED POINTER

"Season your admiration for a while."
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The German short-hair is not a breed one would buy strictly for quail hunting. It was bred for versatility from a mixed-up ancestry. No general-purpose breed can compete against a specialist on the specialist's game.

In the Deep South, where quail hunting is a way of life, there are few short-hairs. In areas where pheasants and ducks are more abundant than quail, the short-hair is used as a pointing and retrieving dog for these species, and secondly for quail.

The short-hair generally does not have as strong a hunting instinct or as good a nose as pointers or setters, although there are outstanding individual exceptions. It is a close-to-medium-working dog with a steady gait.

It's large-boned and can break through dense cover as it quarters in front of the hunters. Despite its short hair, it will plunge into cold water to retrieve waterfowl.



The German short-haired pointer is also a good retrieving dog favored by many midwestern hunters for pheasant and waterfowl. The dog does a fair job on quail, but his mottled brown coat blends in with vegetation, making it hard for hunters to keep track of him. (Photo credit: American Field.)

The dog is fairly biddable but not an early bloomer, perhaps because most owners train it for versatility rather than speciality. The tail is docked, and on quail it does not have the style and class of pointers or setters. In the field, the short-hair lacks the bold confidence of pointers. However, the dog will find the birds and indicate where they are.

The short-hair has average intelligence and a mild disposition. They are large dogs, some of them hosses, and it doesn't pay another dog to jump on one. The short-hair shows affection to humans but not the limpid-eyed adoration of the setter. They are also voracious eaters.

Color is one of the short-hairs biggest handicaps for upland hunting. Its basic color, liver with white flecks or nearly solid liver, blends into the cover and shadows. Late in the afternoon, you can lose a

short-hair on point in the shadows 15 yards away.

Slow, methodical, close-to-medium workers, they are useful for foot and spot hunting. If you haul a pair of big males in the family car, you'd better have them well trained. They can digest your upholstery in a couple of hours. I don't consider the big, tough short-hair suitable for apartment or suburban living, although, to my surprise, many people do keep them as combination family pets and hunting dogs.

The four pointing breeds we have discussed are born with varying instinct to retrieve. They can all be trained to retrieve, and you will be better off in the long run to force-break them. This means they are taught to go and fetch anything you throw or shoot, whether it's a training pad, beer can, dove, or quail.



It takes a nifty pointer to straddle the fence and keep his poise and his point as the quail thunder up and fly for cover.

If your circumstances are such that you can only own one or two dogs, you will first want to develop them as quail specialists. They will readily adapt to pointing other upland game which you might wish to hunt, such as pheasants, woodcock, and possibly ruffed grouse.

You will enjoy taking a Brittany, English setter, or German short-hair to a dove field to fetch your birds. If you do not own a retrieving breed, such as a Labrador or golden, you can use your forced-broke pointing dog to retrieve waterfowl.

IRISH SETTERS, WEIMARANERS, VIZSLAS, POINTING GRIFFONS AND OTHER STRANGE DOGS

*"Whom should I knock?" Shakespeare,
The Taming of the Shrew*

The Irish setter was ruined years ago by the bench show people who bred out its hunting

instinct, nose, and intelligence. They are beautiful but useless for hunting quail. Through selective breeding, a few kennels are trying to bring them back for hunting.

The Weimaraner was developed in Germany to point, retrieve, trail, work in all cover and weather, and be a protector, house dog, and loving companion. It's too much to expect of one animal. The kindest thing I can say about a Weimaraner is that it makes a good watchdog.

Vizslas, Pointing Griffons, and other exotic breeds should be left to their own devices.

To come up with one good quail dog is hard, no matter how you approach it. It's only common sense to start with a breed of dog developed to hunt quail or that shows the capacity to do so.

If you decide to own your own hunting dog, I suggest that you do it one of two ways: buy a puppy at six weeks of age and start training him yourself when it's seven weeks old, or buy a well-



This pointer is on a solid point with a quail in its mouth. While retrieving a single, he got a new scent and instantly pointed another bird.

trained, finished dog two to three years old.

Starting your own pup and training him to be your hunting partner brings great pleasure and many heartaches. One big advantage is that you get to know each other so well. Another is that you can train the dog to suit your requirements.

If you are new to dog training, or have had limited experience, buy a copy of Richard A. Wolters' book, *Gun Dog*, for \$6.95, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., 201 Park Avenue S., New York, N.Y. 10003. Order it from Dutton or a dog supply company if the local book dealer does not have it.

The system of training in the book is based on a ten-year scientific study of the mental development of a dog. The author has popularized it, broken it down into steps which are easy to follow, and used more than two hundred pictures to clearly illustrate the steps.

This rapid, revolutionary way of training a

shooting dog is contrary to methods used by many professionals. Training begins when the pup is seven weeks old, and by the time it's six months old, it should be a well-mannered pointing dog. With more field experience on quail it should be a finished dog at about one year old. If the season falls right, you can start hunting an obedient dog at five or six months of age.

The trick to the Wolters' method is to follow it exactly. Do not ask anyone's opinion. Follow the book. Hundreds of people who never owned a dog before have used it successfully.

A puppy six weeks old will cost from \$50 to \$150. A two-year-old finished dog will cost you from \$200 to \$600. Sometimes this is the cheapest way to own a dog. Although a hunter may balk at paying \$400 for a trained dog, he may find it a bargain if he sits down and figures how much the trainer has invested in food, kenneling, vet fees, and hours of



This is an unusual situation. The pointer was running, got whiff of bird, couldn't stop immediately, but turned his head and pointed backwards. Background is good typical palmetto quail hunting country.

training time.

Hunting dogs are cheaper right after the quail season has closed. But never, never buy a mature dog unless you have seen him hunt in the field. No matter what anyone tells you or swears to, take the dog hunting before you decide to buy.

There is a strong inclination among hunters to believe that if they buy a puppy or a finished dog from some distant kennel, they'll come up with

something hot. A sportsman in Georgia gets to thinking those old boys in Oklahoma may know something special. He orders a dog from them, but at the same time, those old boys in Oklahoma are ordering secret weapons from Georgia. The place to buy a dog is nearby, where you can see what you are buying and perhaps even see the dog's sire, dam, and grandparents.

According to one of Charley's Laws, a cheap dog



This pup instinctively points a bird wing but must learn control.

brings big trouble. Whenever anyone wants to give you a dog, put on your track shoes and skedaddle.

Two publications which will help you learn more about dogs are; *American Field*, 222 W. Adams Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606, published weekly at \$10.00 a year; and *Hunting Dog*, P.O. Box 330, Greenfield, Ohio 45123, published monthly (a yearly subscription is \$7.00, or \$.75 a copy at newsstands).

These publications carry ads from dog supply companies and kennels, notices and reviews of shooting dog trials, and articles of help and interest to dog owners.



Some dogs are born with strong instincts to point. At ten weeks this English Setter pup is on her way to being a well-mannered pointing dog.

Equipment



When I see the maze of equipment some hunters take, I fondly remember the enjoyment and simplicity of quail hunting during my boyhood in eastern North Carolina. On a Saturday morning, I would pedal a bicycle to a farm boy's home. Once he shook away from chores, we walked through the kitchen, picked up some leftover country ham and biscuits or perhaps a chunk of cornbread, and walked out the back door. He whistled for the dogs as he took his gun down from two wooden pegs. He didn't change clothes or brogans; the ones he wore were for work, school, and hunting.

A brace of pointers, which lived off table scraps and only looked sleek at hog-killing time, would amble out from underneath the house, stretch and grin. The hunt began when we left the backyard; it lasted two hours or until dark. The cold leftovers, which we shared with the rawboned pointers, were all we needed.

The hunt ended when we returned to his home, the dogs went to the kitchen door to beg scraps, and my friend put his gun back on the pegs. He faithfully cleaned it every spring.

Hunting is seldom that simple and easy anymore. Most hunters today want the same comforts and conveniences of their modern homes and appliances in the field.

The less gear I have to handle in preparing a day's hunt, the better I like it. Others enjoy working on equipment and remodeling it more than they do the hunting.

If you don't own a recreational vehicle or pickup truck, there's nothing wrong with using your family car. Dogs should never be hauled in the trunk; too many have died there from carbon monoxide poisoning. Put your guns, extra clothing, and food in the trunk, and the dogs in the back seat. A blanket or tarp over the upholstery helps preserve it. Obviously, three or four dogs in a standard car, and perhaps two in a compact, is the limit. Unruly dogs cannot be tolerated.

For hunting on foot and spot hunting, an automobile is often better than a four-wheel-drive vehicle. You drive to and from the field in comfort, and you do not get stuck in sand and mud as often. You know you can't drive a car across fields, so you park and walk. In a four-wheel-drive, there's a tendency to think you can go anyplace, and that's when you get stuck and lose half a day.

For foot and spot hunting, you don't need as many dogs as for woods cruising. You move at a

slower pace and, if the weather is not too hot, the dogs, with a noon break, can hold up for three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon.

For woods cruising or rapidly covering large tracts of land, you need a four-wheel-drive vehicle modified to carry a minimum of six dogs. Put the dogs down a brace at a time and alternate them.

If you decide to buy a new recreational vehicle, please keep in mind that none on the market are designed for quail hunting. Any make you buy will need modifications. The following points should be considered:

1. Get a four-wheel-drive to enable you to maneuver in woods and to cross most terrain.

2. Consider weather you will be hunting in *most* of the time. Can you do without the cab and doors?

3. Cut and weld so getting in and out of the vehicle can be quickly and easily done. You may be in and out twenty times on a morning's hunt. If it isn't easy, you'll wear yourself down.

4. Consider your plan to transport your dogs. Remember, you'll be putting them in and out all day.

5. Provide gun racks for safe storage and convenience in taking guns down and putting them back. More serious gun accidents occur around and in vehicles than in the field.

6. Modify your vehicle, if necessary, so one or more hunters can ride high to better watch the dogs.

7. Carry an axe and spade to help you get out when you are stuck. Also consider hauling a cable winch and one pair of large wire cutters for cutting stray wire which wraps around the axles and transmission.

8. Carry water cans for the dogs. You'll hunt faster from a vehicle than on foot—actually most beginners drive too fast—and the dogs get hot and thirsty. If you're good at remodeling, you may wish to install an internal water tank with an outside faucet.

9. Provide space for an ice chest, both for holding your food and drinks and chilling birds in case you dress them in the field.

10. Take wire snips as an aid in dressing birds, cellophane bags, first aid kit, and a snake bite kit. You'll need storage space for gun cases, extra hunting clothing, shells, and other gear which you'll insist on taking along, although you'll never use it.

From these requirements, you'll understand that you just can't buy a Jeep or Scout for quail hunting. You have to modify it. You have to be able to get in and out quickly and safely without stumbling



Whenever you modify a recreational vehicle, it's safer to build gun and shell storage on the outside. That way, there's no reason to take guns in and out of the interior, a major cause of accidents. Any type of dog box must be well ventilated.

over gear. The rule of thumb is to take the least amount of gear you can get by on, and have storage space for it where you won't stumble on it or have to reshuffle all day. Remember, in quail hunting you go for a half or full day, not for a week-long safari.

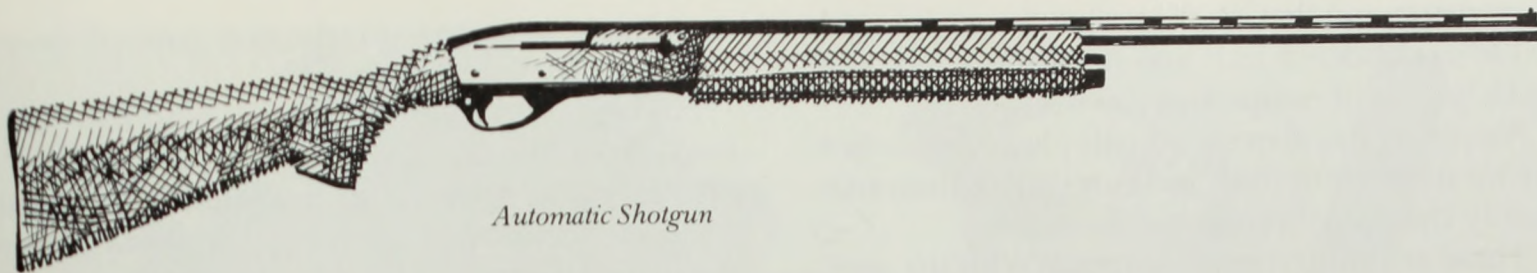
Although a pickup truck will not go every place a Jeep will, it needs less modification and has more room. You can put portable dog boxes in the bed, install gun racks behind the driver, and add a couple of simple storage boxes in the back to take care of the other gear. For a long drive on the highway, today's pickups are as comfortable as many cars.

Any way you cut it, a special vehicle for hunting is expensive. Before you invest, analyze your situation. If you're new to quail hunting, there's a lot to be said for using your car for a year or two.

Then, if you decide on a special vehicle, you'll know what you want for your type of hunting.

There's more nonsense written about shotguns than any other part of quail hunting. A shotgun is used as an extension of the eyes. The barrel is nothing but a pipe for directing the shot, with a slight constriction near the muzzle, called choke, which controls shot spread. The shell is fired, and by the time the shot travels 16 to 20 inches down the barrel, all of the powder is burned up. From a practical standpoint, one gun shoots no harder or farther than another. A \$4,000 shotgun has no more capacity in the field than a second-hand shotgun which costs \$50.

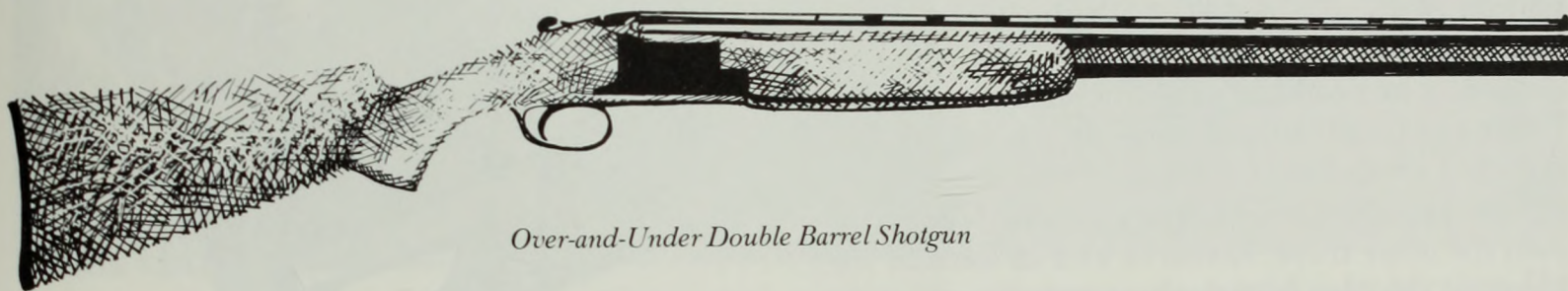
What is important is that the gun fits you reasonably well, that you have patterned it at 15 yards and 35 yards (not at 40 yards as the manufacturers do), that you understand your pattern and can esti-



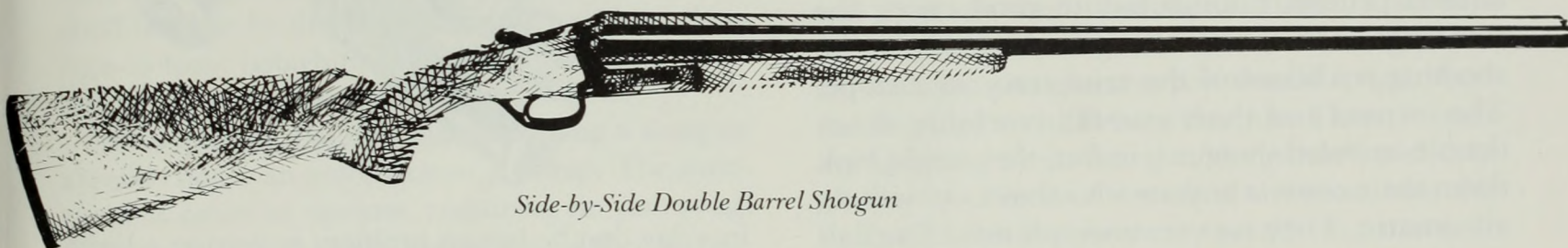
Automatic Shotgun



Pump Action Shotgun



Over-and-Under Double Barrel Shotgun



Side-by-Side Double Barrel Shotgun

mate range, and that you have shot the gun enough to have confidence in it and handle it safely with some degree of competence.

Assuming the above, you will always shoot better by sticking to that one gun rather than constantly changing brands and models.

There are four types of shotguns. With the semi-automatic (popularly called automatic), each time you pull the trigger the gun fires. With the repeating or pump shotgun, when you fire you must pump or "shuck" the action to eject the spent hull and move a shell from the magazine to the chamber. The automatic does this for you with gas pressure. Both the automatic and pump have single barrels. Nearly all models have a capacity of at least three shells, one in the chamber and two in the magazine; some have a capacity of five, but they usually have to be plugged to allow only three to comply with most state game laws. In quail hunting, it is a great advantage to have a gun that can be loaded with three shells.

The side-by-side double has two barrels fastened together with a sighting plane down the middle. In the over-and-under double, one barrel is above the other, and the sighting plane runs down the middle of the top barrel. With the exception of custom-made guns, the two barrels have different chokes. The doubles have one or two triggers. Their big disadvantage in quail hunting is that only two shells can be loaded.

The gas-operated automatics have less recoil than the other three. Recoil or kick in some of the 12-gauge doubles is excessive, and one can only wonder if the people who use them have skulls like woodpeckers to keep their brains from being scrambled.

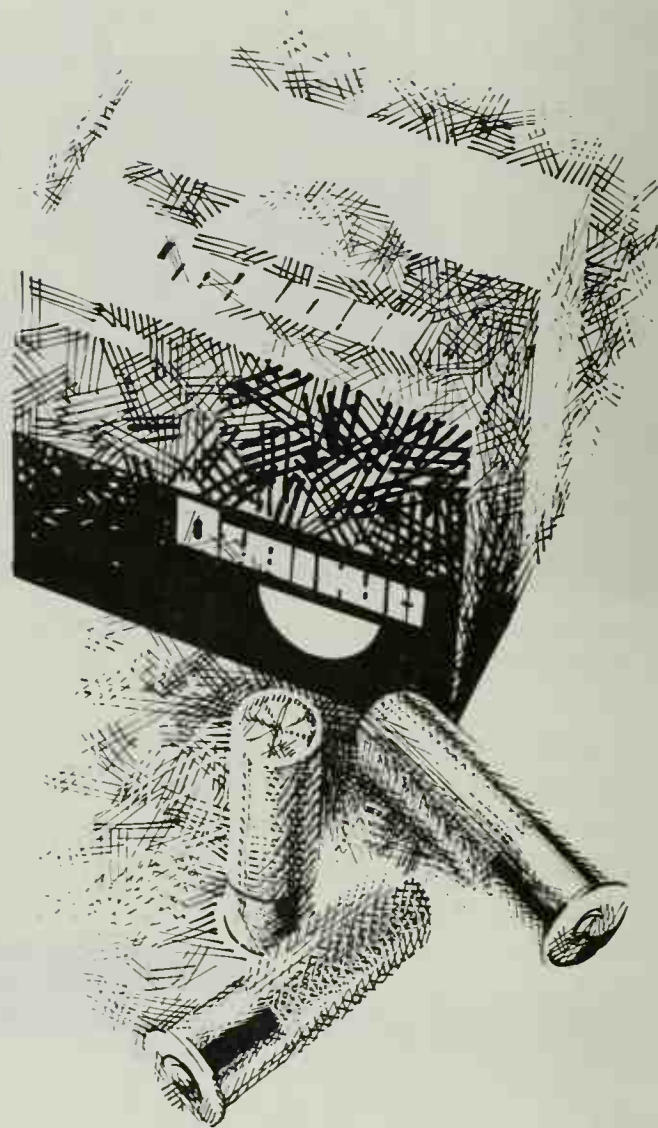
In much of the South, the side-by-side double is the traditional choice of shotgun. On the wealthy quail plantations, where 15,000 to 30,000 acres are farmed primarily for bobwhite production, the hunting is the closest thing in America to the shooting traditions of the aristocracy in Europe. The owners and their guests invariably shoot double-barreled shotguns; in fact, they might look down their noses at anyone who shows up with an automatic. They toss around splendid English doubles, costing up to \$5,000, as casually as I might throw away a cacklebur. But let me tell you, these fine gentlemen in their fancy hunting coats and tweed hats can bust those quail. One reason is that their expensive shotguns are tailored to fit them. When one of those fancy walnut stocks is raised to

the cheek, it fits as snugly as a pair of deer-skin gloves.

Hunters of less wealth have followed the tradition of the Southern aristocracy in choosing a double, just as surely as the latter has followed the European nobility. I admire the people who preserve traditions; yet they continue to use hour glasses years after watches were invented.

The side-by-side double does not have the capability of a single-barreled gun and is more difficult to learn to shoot. If you doubt this, just check your skeet tournaments. You will no longer see anyone in competition using the old-fashioned double, and it is a rarity in trap.

The wealthy owner of a quail plantation does not need a third shell. He puts up so many birds



in a day that he has no problem in getting a limit. But the average hunter does not have access to top quail land. He needs that third shot when opportunities arise.

Beginning quail shooters dream of the day when they will bag their first triple on a rising covey. Experienced hunters are as proud of getting a



A great tradition of quail hunting is fathers teaching their sons the lore and pleasure of safe hunting for bobwhite. The youngster proves his ability with a side-by-side double shotgun; the father uses a semi-automatic.

triple as receiving a raise at the office. When a hunter walks into singles that have set down close to one another, he may flush two birds, and a second later three more go up. He welcomes the third shell because he did not have time to reload. It is rare to hunt bobwhite as much as half a day and not have use for that third round.

Consequently, the new hunter buying a shotgun should choose an automatic or a pump. The automatic is easier to operate, requiring no pumping. The gas-operated models have the further advantage of reduced recoil.

If you are an experienced hunter and learned how to shoot with a pump shotgun, then by all means stick with it. An expert can get off three shots with a pump faster than with an automatic.

Most hunters continue to shoot whatever type of

shotgun they first learned to handle. If they are satisfied with their shooting, there is no need for them to change.

Shotguns are chambered to shoot 12-, 16-, 20-, and 28-gauge shells and the .410-bore. The lower the number, the more shot per shell. Unless you are a master shotgunner, you should forget about the 28-gauge and .410-bore shotgun. There is nothing sporting about being undergunned and crippling a lot of birds. Even off of the same assembly line, .410-bore shotguns vary greatly in pattern. In years past, the .410-bore shotgun was often a boy's first gun, given to him to learn to shoot. It succeeded masterfully in handicapping the youngster. Gas-operated 20-gauge shotguns are ideal for teaching a boy or woman to shoot. The guns do not weigh too much and have little kick. The shells



This illustrates a safe way to transport shotguns in open woods cruising, although the guns must be removed before plowing through thick brushy cover. When hunting from any kind of car or RV, the hunter needs a place to safely rest his gun. The guns should not be loaded until the dogs are moving out; guns should always be kept unloaded near or in a vehicle, regardless of the storage design.

have enough shot to crumple a target or bird, giving the shooter confidence.

With the wide choice of shotshell loadings on the market today in 12- and 20-gauges, there's little need for the 16. It's a compromise between the 12 and the 20. Many a quail hunter in the South learned to hunt with a Browning Sweet Sixteen, a grand old shotgun, and will continue to tote it through his last hunt, but the 16-gauge is on its way out.

The *diameter* of a shotgun pattern is the same in 12-, 16-, or 20-gauges for the same choke. The extra number of shots in a 12- over a 20-gauge simply means that the pattern is more dense in the 12. However, the 20-gauge pattern is dense enough to kill quail cleanly at reasonable ranges.

Generally, the more shot in a shell, the heavier

the shotgun needed to fire it. That is, a 12-gauge shotgun weighs about one pound more than a 20-gauge in the same model. This one-pound difference is the most mysterious weight in the world. At the end of a hard day of walking, your 20 will feel heavy enough. If you changed it for a 12, weighing only a pound more, you could hardly swing it. The lighter 20 swings faster than the heavier 12, and this is especially critical in brush shooting or toward the end of a long day. I have worked out with barbells before the hunting season, but I could never get a 12-gauge mounted and moving as fast as a 20-gauge. In quail shooting, time is what runs out.

One of Charley's Laws states that in selecting any piece of sporting equipment, you have to compromise. Select the happy medium to handle condi-



This homemade rig has separate dog boxes. Hunters follow behind as a brace or trio of dogs comb the cover looking for a covey of quail.

tions you expect to encounter most often in the field.

The 20-gauge shotgun is the best choice for the beginning quail shooter. Many old-timers who started with a 12-gauge gravitate to the 20.

The shooter today has the best sporting firearms and shells in the history of the business. Shells in particular are more efficient than ever before. The 20-gauge shell of today has the shocking power of the 16-gauge of thirty years ago. A high-power 20-gauge is roughly the same as today's low-power 16 and is not much lower than the light 12-loads. Further, a shooter can use a high-power (high brass) 20 in a gas-operated automatic without noticing recoil. Any 20-gauge shell on the market today has the capability of killing quail cleanly. Pointing the gun in the right direction also helps.

Most of the quail killed are shot between 15 and

35 yards. For automatic or pump shotgun, there is no choice of choke. Improved cylinder is it! If you use a double, the first barrel should be improved cylinder.

There may be individual chances at quail when you wish you had a full choke for shooting at 40 yards away, or had no choke to shoot at one trying to knock your hat off, but the improved cylinder choke gives you the best chance most of the time. Quail hunters who prefer double-guns buy them choked improved cylinder and modified.

Skeet guns with one barrel have a "skeet" choke. Double skeet guns have a number 1 and a number 2 skeet choke. Skeet chokes are roughly equivalent to improved cylinder as far as practical field shooting. Skeet guns are fine for quail hunting although, because of matted or ventilated ribs and other extra weight, they weigh more than a field gun.

The barrel length for an automatic or pump shotgun should be 26 inches, the shortest regular length made. This length barrel swings faster than a longer barrel. The 4-inch difference between a 26-inch quail barrel and a 30-inch duck barrel seems small, but like the gauge weight difference, it suddenly becomes critical. If you have been shooting quail and go to a duck blind with a longer barrel, you'll be amazed at how hard it is to get it moving.

There are three choices of shot sizes—7½s, 8s, or 9s. The smaller the number, the larger the shot.

Although hunters spend a lot of time arguing about it, size does not make much difference. Shot size is a compromise with the conditions you most often encounter. Some days the birds hold tightly, both as coveys and singles, and are close when you shoot; other days, the birds are spooky and farther away when you hit them. Obviously, number 8 shot is the happy medium and there is nothing wrong in starting with this size and sticking with it.

However, I know you'll want to piddle around changing shot sizes. The new shooter tends to lean to smaller shot, figuring because he has more shot per shell, he's more likely to bring a bird down. It ain't necessarily so. Small shot loses speed more quickly than heavier shot and is deflected more easily. A larger shot has more mass and energy when it strikes the quail, thus, more shocking power. Shock is what kills most birds, not penetration. You can equally argue that smaller shot makes a denser pattern so more shot will hit the bird. Let's not fight about it. I know that if you have a good day with 9s, that's the shot you'll be using for a long time.

If you don't want to use happy-medium 8s all the time, here are a couple of guides. Lean to a larger shot when you expect to be shooting a lot in brush and, on a windy day, when birds will be spooky. Some hunters use larger shot late in the season when, they believe, quail are wilder or stay closely to protective cover. Early in the season, when the birds are young, you may wish to lean toward 9s.

Using my Remington Model 1100 in 20-gauge, I've experimented with loading a low brass number 8 in the chamber and backing it with two number 7½ shells in the magazine. It was good in theory, but when the shooting got hot, I found I was loading them bassakwards, plus occasionally loading a chapstick or pocket knife. Once I almost loaded a roll of Lifesavers.

The important thing for you to know is that all three shot sizes will kill quail, if you put it on them. If you're missing a lot of birds in the field, changing shot sizes won't cure the problem.

Three manufacturers—Remington, Federal, and Winchester—sell over 90 percent of the shells in the United States, under their own or other brand names. There's little difference between them and it doesn't matter which brand you choose. If you get lucky some day and bag eight straight quail with Federal shells, that's the brand you'll swear by the rest of your life.

If you are new to shotgunning, you may more easily learn the fundamentals at a skeet field than by trying to hit quail. A round of skeet, twenty-five shots, will cost about four dollars. This covers targets, shells, and use of the field. If a skeet field is not handy, you can buy a handtrap for about six dollars and get a friend to throw clay targets for you. A carton of 135 targets costs about five or six dollars.

In skeet shooting, you know exactly where the target will be thrown. Until you can consistently break fifteen-plus out of twenty-five targets, you should not go quail hunting. If you can't hit a clay target, when you know in advance where it is going, how can you expect to hit a quail when you never know where it's going? Sometimes I think the quail doesn't know either.

The more shotgun shooting of any kind you do, the better your hunting score. It is true that some expert skeet shooters, who consistently break 95 out of 100 targets, may not shoot well on quail the first few times they go hunting. This is no reflection on their shotgun handling ability. They're in a strange, new situation. As soon as they catch on to how the birds flush and fly, they rapidly become good quail shots.

By practicing on a skeet field, you gain confidence as you learn to break clay targets. There are always old-timers at a skeet club willing to give free coaching. And, believe me, they will thoroughly check you for safe gun handling.

There is just one catch in buying a mass-production gun: its standard stock dimensions may not fit you. If you have an unusually long or short neck, narrow shoulders, or short arms, the standard gun truly may not fit. If you are absolutely sure, don't do anything to the gun yourself. Take it to an expert gunsmith, have him check the fit-



This jeep has been modified for comfortable woods cruising behind a brace of wide-ranging dogs. The windshield folds down, the rear seat is modified for the hunters to sit higher to more easily follow the dogs, and a gun box is on each side of the dog box, which is built to hold five or six dogs.

ting and follow his recommendations. Sometimes an inexpensive change is all you need. If you really must have a custom-made gun, it will be expensive.

One of Charley's Laws says that hunters who own guns more than six months become experts anxious to tell someone else how to change their gun dimensions. This will happen to you. Run from them, fast! When it's necessary to tamper with a shotgun, take it to a gunsmith of good reputation.

From time to time, you will run across hunters who mostly shoot in brush. They may have changed their barrels by cutting four to six inches off the muzzles, which also takes out the choke; they are shooting pipes twenty to twenty-two inches long with cylinder or no choke. They can pop those quail!

You will be tempted to cut your barrel down.

Don't! Those old brush boys could hit birds if they had goose guns. Most of the time, the 26-inch barrel with improved cylinder is absolutely the best combination. Try it a year or two and then you'll know whether or not you wish to make modifications.

A new hunter is a peculiar creature. He understands that a student must go to college for eight years to become a doctor, but he doesn't understand that he must serve an apprenticeship to become a competent quail hunter. He buys an expensive shotgun, and if he can't kill quail after a hunt or two, he faults the gun or something else. Anything is a handy excuse except blaming himself for not practicing enough to know how to use his shotgun.

Charley's Constant states that it is impossible for a new quail hunter to come up with an original

excuse for missing. It can't be a new one because Charley has previously used them all.

To protect your gun in a station wagon, pickup, or other vehicle, buy a soft case made of canvas, Naugahyde, or leather. Satisfactory cases made of canvas or Naugahyde sell for ten to fifteen dollars. Leather looks better, but costs more and requires upkeep.

The insides of soft cases are lined with wool or a synthetic material. The inside collects moisture. The case may "sweat" and a gun left inside for a few months may rust. Use a case for transporting, not storage.

If you plan to take your shotgun on commercial aircraft, you need a hard case. A good one will cost about \$40. The airlines do not have standard regulations for transporting firearms. Each airline has its own regulations and the employees seldom know them. The clerk who sells you a ticket may tell you that you can take your cased gun into the cabin. But when you get ready to board, another clerk will insist that the shotgun must go in cargo. Your shotgun may survive riding cargo in a hard case, but it has small chance in a soft case. Any ammunition, which you must declare, goes cargo and should be well padded and tightly wrapped. For hunting trips via commercial airlines, check all of the regulations on transporting guns and ammunition well ahead of departure time.

The care and maintenance of shotguns is simple. Here is what to do. If the gun gets soaked, break it down, dry it, and put as little oil as possible on it, inside and out. If the inside of the barrel doesn't get rained in or wet, swab it out at the end of the season. Modern smokeless powder does not chew up the inside of the barrel as black powder used to. Cleaning the barrel after each hunt is not necessary.

Hands sweat salt. Any time they touch metal, a rust spot buds unless the surface is cleaned and oiled. After each hunting trip, clean all outside metal surfaces with a dry cloth, cover the metal with a thin layer of oil, and store the gun uncased in a cabinet. The oil prevents the metal from oxidizing and rusting.

Do not oil the inside working mechanism. Most hunters cannot resist squirting oil into the action. The oil collects dust, pollen, and dirt which clog the moving parts and in turn cause malfunctions. About every two or three years, take the shotgun to a gunsmith and have him check it and give it a thorough cleaning.

There is no need to buy expensive gun oil with

fancy labels. An inexpensive light household oil will do the job. Charley is prejudiced against all sprays. But, if you do not mind using them, the best combination rust remover and lubricant is WD-40. It is expensive but excellent for cleaning and oiling metal.

There are two basic types of footwear, leather and rubber. Rubber is waterproof; leather, almost by definition, cannot be for long. It is porous. Some leather boots are impregnated with silicone and are waterproof to start with; it's another story after they are sliced up with briars and barbed wire.

The type of hunting you do most of the time determines the type of boots you need. Those who walk all of the time will not enjoy hunting unless their boots are comfortable. I prefer leather boots for walking and keep them oiled so my feet usually stay dry. When hunting marsh or swampland, rubber boots may have to be worn if you want dry feet.

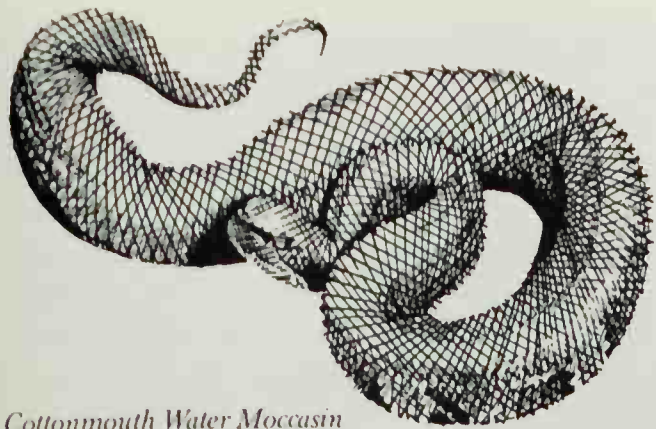
Insulated boots are heavier and make my feet perspire; in a short time, my feet are slipping on an inside puddle. For most quail walking, warmth is no problem if feet can be kept dry.

In the mesquite country of Texas and across the South, hunters have to get in thorns and briars. Most boots wear out on the tops quicker than on the bottoms. The cuts and scratches from thorns, sharp brush, and barbed wire damage the waterproofing and eventually wear out the toes. With rubber boots, one piece of barbed wire will take out a top and a new pair must be bought. Thick leather toes last longer.

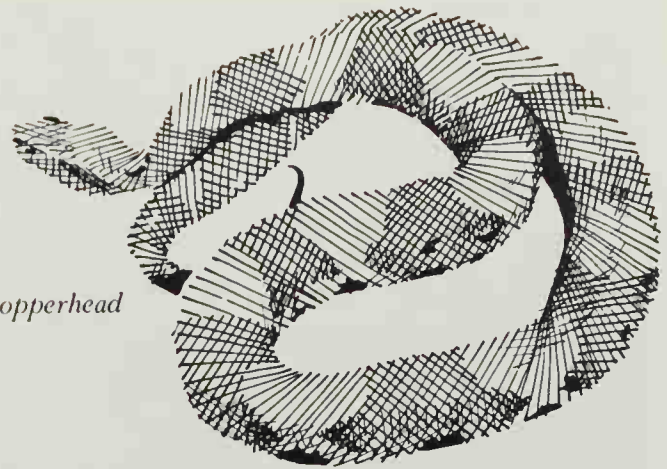
Poisonous snakes upset hunters. Of the four venomous snakes found in the United States—copperhead, cottonmouth moccasin, rattlesnake, and coral snake—one or more species may be encountered while hunting quail. Generally, in the northern and middle states, the snakes go into winter quarters with the first freeze and stay there. In the deep South, where warm spells intersperse cold snaps, one may dispute territory with rattlers throughout the winter. The eastern and western diamondback rattlers are the ones which most frequently destroy the equilibrium of hunters.

I dislike finding a rattler in the morning. It means for the rest of the day I will hunt snakes and not quail. I have shot several rattlers on the rise. I mean while I was rising, not the snakes.

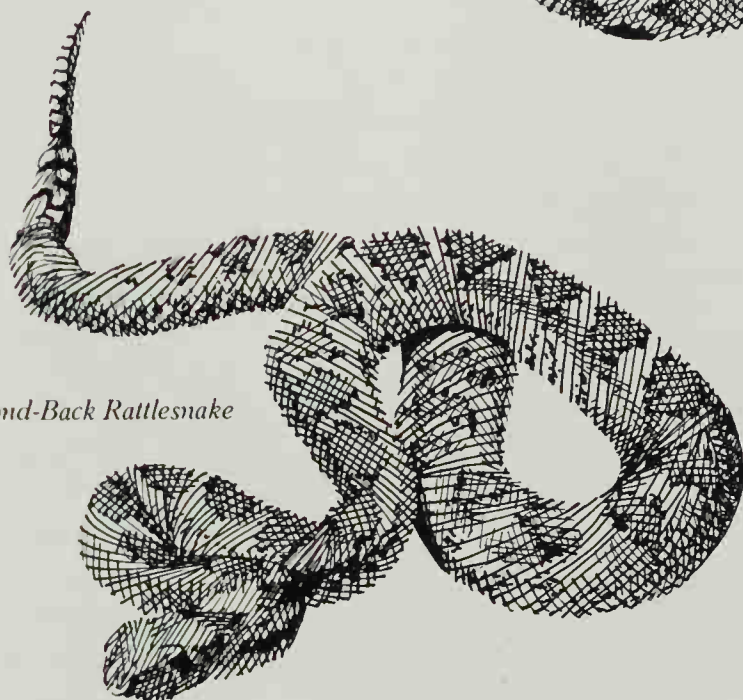
One morning in south Georgia, the dogs pointed rattlers three different times. No dogs were bitten,



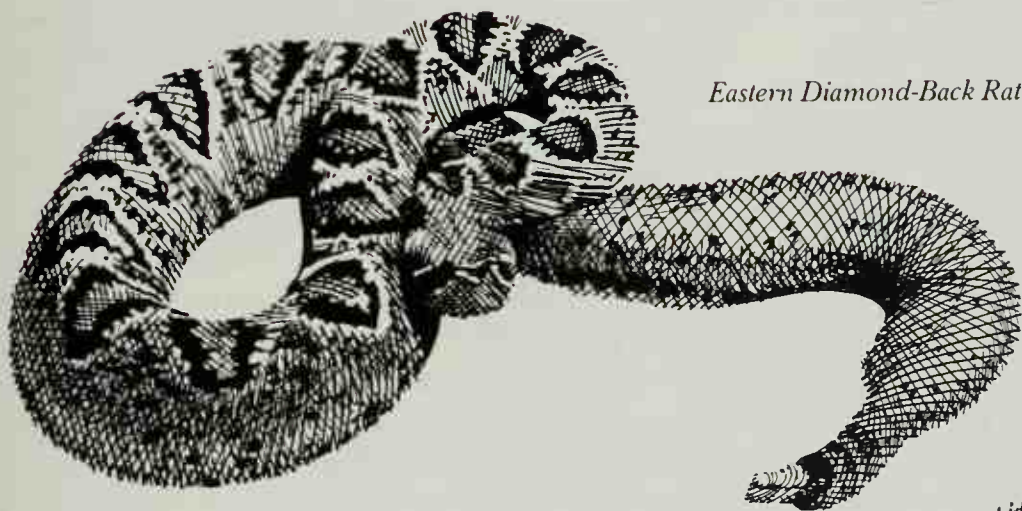
Cottonmouth Water Moccasin



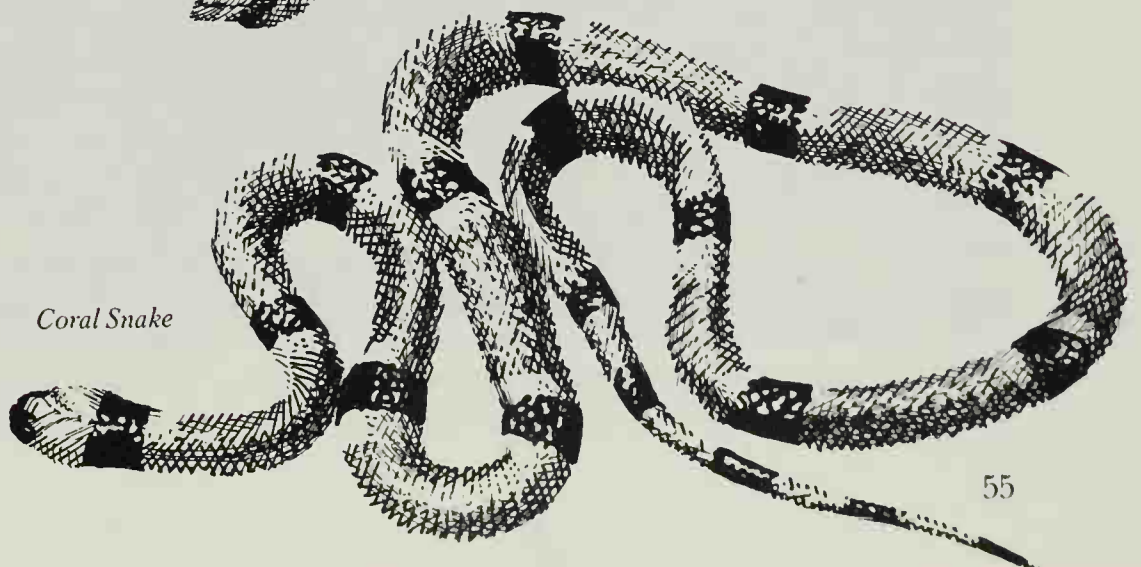
Copperhead



Western Diamond-Back Rattlesnake



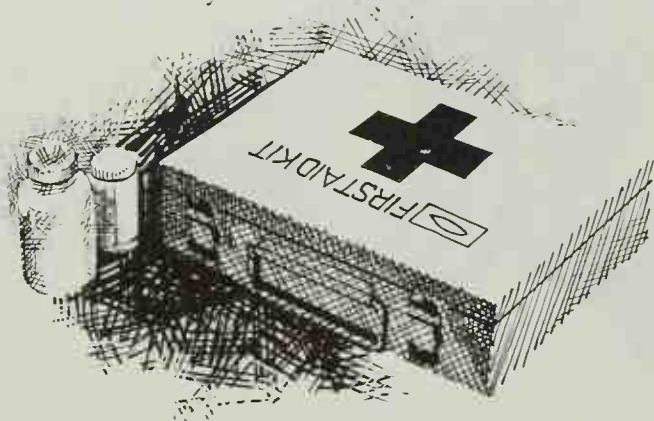
Eastern Diamond-Back Rattlesnake



Coral Snake

but I tiptoed out of the open pine woods, sometimes walking three feet off the ground, and went home. Before I went to sleep that night, I looked under my bed to see if any rattlers were there.

Exact statistics on the number of people who die from snakebite each year are not available. Roger A. Caras, in his book *Dangerous to Man*, reports death from rattlesnakes amounted to fifteen in 1960, nine in 1959, seven in 1958, five in 1957. These are total fatalities from hikers, berry pickers, farm workers, etc. Caras quotes an expert as estimating that the mortality rate from snakebite is about 1½ to 2 percent. Caras says, "During the years 1950-54, seventy-one people in the United States were killed by venomous snakes, while eighty-six were killed by hymenopterous insects—one by ants, and eighty-five by bees, wasps, and hornets. Bees alone accounted for fifty-two."



The chances of a hunter becoming a fatality are higher driving to and from the hunting area than being shot while hunting. But I don't care what the statistics are on driving and bees. When I step on a rattler I am considerably perturbed.

Rattlesnakes can strike and penetrate rubber boots with their needle fangs. This is very inconvenient.

The solution is to wear boots of heavy leather, thick leather leggings, or leggings of fiber glass or aluminum. I find the leggings hot and some are cumbersome.

In the long run, leather boots are the cheapest to buy. Although the initial outlay may be higher, they hold up for many years, sometimes for life. I have worn a pair of Gokey leather boots for sixteen years; the tops are in good shape and the bottoms have been resoled once.

There are two choices of Gokeys. The men's Gokey Snakeproof Boots are 17 inches high and are cut from 8- to 9-ounce Brazil ski grain leather. No poisonous snake in the United States can penetrate the leather, and they seldom strike higher than 10 to 12 inches. The boots sell for \$110. The

snakeproof model does have disadvantages: they are heavy, hot because air cannot easily circulate down them, a little binding if one walks in them all day, and not exactly easy to put on and take off.

For these reasons, I wear the Gokey Botte Sauvage Pull-On Boots (there's also a lace model). They are made of 5- to 6-ounce Brazil ski grain leather and are 9½ inches high. They are *not* snakeproof. They are not as thick as the snakeproof model and a snake could hit above the 9½-inch height.

I wear my hunting britches over the Botte Sauvage Boots to give a little protection; the snake might hit at the edge of the britches rather than the center where my leg is. Most snakes strike lower than 9½ inches. In my opinion, not Gokey's, I figure the Botte Sauvage would be snakeproof about 70 percent of the time.

I am willing to give up the 30 percent as a compromise. A pair of Botte Sauvage boots weighs 5 pounds, 2 pounds less than the snakeproof model. They are more comfortable to walk in, get better air circulation and are easy to put on and take off. They sell for \$69 a pair.

You can get a free catalog by writing Gokey Company, 21 W. Fifth Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102. The boots are sold by mail order. You also may wish to check the Russell boot line with your sporting goods dealer.

If you hunt country where poisonous snakes are common, it's a good idea to carry a snakebite kit for the dogs and yourself. The dogs are more likely to get hit than you. When in a new area, find out the location of a veterinarian in case you have to rush a dog back for serum.

In most nations of the world, hunters wear traditional clothing associated with the sport. In America, most hunters dress like they were rejects from the Salvation Army. Perhaps it's a rebellion from our ancestry in Europe where few but the aristocracy and royalty could hunt.

Fortunately, during the past ten or fifteen years, American hunters have begun dressing better. Manufacturers have found a market for clothes with style and hunters have more to choose from. However, some manufacturers apparently have never been hunting or had their clothing tested in the field. They peg the pants legs so tightly that the wearer can barely lift his foot over a fallen log or raise it to pass between strands of barbed wire.

Although hunters have a horror of looking like a city dude, there is a happy medium of wearing



For warm-weather hunting, a vest is cooler than a hunting coat. This hunter wears a long-sleeve shirt to protect his arms from briars. The leading edges of his pants have a protective layer to keep thorns and briars out.

serviceable but stylish clothing which gives the impression that a hunter is proud of his sport.

If you can afford it, you should have two pairs of hunting britches, one pair for cold weather and the other for the warm days at the first part of the season. As it is inevitable that you will have to walk in thick brush and briars, the front of the britches, and perhaps a third of the way up the back, should have material which protects your hide.



Light leather facing will give you the best protection. However, it is hot and absorbs water. If you bust a lot of wet cover, the pants will get heavier and heavier. Leather also costs more than other materials. Some hunters in Texas and Oklahoma use light leather chaps for protection from thorns.

Some britches are faced with naugahyde, a plastic bonded to a mesh backing. Naugahyde is waterproof but hot and a little on the heavy side. If it gets caught in barbed wire, a considerable chunk comes out.

My preference is inexpensive nylon facing which breathes, is light, fairly tough, and water repellent, although not waterproof. Canvas front-

ing, which comes in different weights, is roughly the equivalent of nylon.

In the Deep South, where briars are thick and temperatures are high, it is difficult to find trousers which will protect your legs but at the same time not burn you up. A Law of Charley's says that it is harder to keep cool on a hot day than to stay warm on a cold day.

Hunting britches should have deep pockets and room in the knees and butt. Even if you ride a jeep most of the day, you'll be getting in and out a lot, and tight britches will bind your knees and wear you down. Even worse is trying to jump ditches, go over fences, and step across logs. You have to have free knee movement. Wide britches, if you can find them, give more air circulation on warm days.

Two brands of hunt clothing that combine style and utility are Browning and Duxbak. They don't cost much more than the old-style, heavy, brown canvas which is almost like walking in a suit of armor. Browning and Duxbak clothing is sold at sporting goods dealers and hardware stores.

If you want a pair of britches faced with split cowhide, the best ones I know of sell for \$50 and are available by mail order from Stafford's, P.O. Box 2041, Thomasville, Georgia 31792. Stafford's, a house specializing in equipment for the quail hunter, also makes britches faced with canvas and canvas chaps.

When you put the dogs down at 8:30 A.M., the temperature may be freezing. By 2:00 P.M. it may be up to seventy degrees. The answer to the clothing problem is to wear thin layers which you can quickly take off or add.

A hunting coat should be large enough to allow you to wear underwear, a shirt, and a sweater underneath without binding. Shoulder pleats give roominess when you swing a gun.

The shell pockets should be deep, with button flaps, so when you bend over the shells don't fall out. Elastic shell holders, for individually holding a single shell on the outside, are nuisances; they quickly get ripped out by briars and brush.

A coat made of lightweight canvas duck, about 9-ounce weight, is a preferable choice. It breathes and repels a light rain. It is not waterproof, but dries out fairly fast if you get soaked.

A coat, especially the sleeves, is necessary to keep you from getting carved up by briars. The two lower pockets are necessary for toting shells. There should be two higher pockets for glasses and

other personal items. You will have trouble finding a coat with a top pocket deep enough to button after putting your glasses in it. The game bag has room to store a couple of sandwiches.

Most hunting coats have rubber or rubberized game bags. They have the advantage of being liquid proof; that is, blood from a shot bird does not drain out and mess up your clothing. The disadvantage of a rubber game bag is that if it is not removable the coat cannot be dry-cleaned; the steam from dry cleaning may melt and gum up the bag. Coats with removable rubber game bags cost more. Be sure to read the manufacturer's tag on a garment before buying.

Some game bags are made of canvas or similar material. These can be dry-cleaned, but they have the disadvantage of leaking blood. Dead birds cool and aerate better in canvas bags than in rubber.

Buying hunting clothing is always a compromise. Just as there is no gun which is ideal for every shot, there is no pair of britches or hunting coat that is perfect for every hunt. You buy what is best for *you* most of the time.

For hunting in warm weather, you may wish to wear a shooting vest or a game bag around the waist that is held by adjustable shoulder straps or elastic.

Contrast the color of your hunting clothing with the surroundings where you hunt so that your hunting partner and other parties can easily see you. White is a favorite on many quail plantations. One warning about wearing white or light tan: if you hunt quail where there are deer hunters, these colors may be mistaken for deer skin or the white flag of a deer's tail. For this reason, some quail hunters prefer grey or green clothing and carry red handkerchiefs rather than white.

Wear a cap made of soft acrilan. The color should be daylight fluorescent hunter orange, a color that does not occur in nature. Hunter orange is the most visible of all colors in varying light conditions. Consider buying your hunting coat or vest made all or partly of this color. It may save your life.

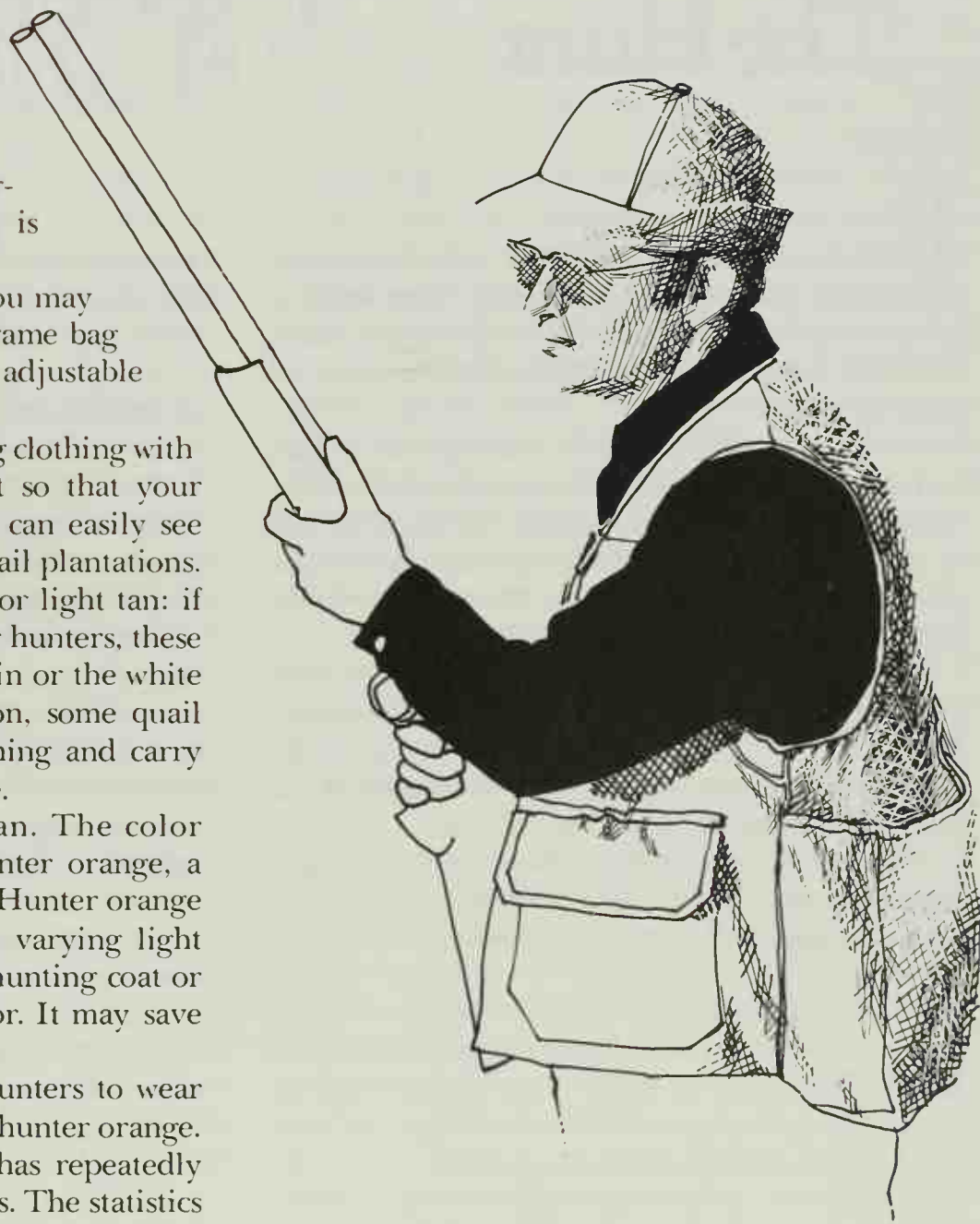
Many states now require deer hunters to wear a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange. Mandatory use of hunter orange has repeatedly prevented gun injuries and fatalities. The statistics are in! Yet no state game and fish commission re-

quires it for upland hunters who spend much of their time in brush. The color was developed in a chemical laboratory in the 1880s.

I urge and beg you to wear this color! It is a courtesy to your hunting companions. You will kill more quail if you and your buddy both wear it, because you will always know where the other is and there will be no hesitation or balking when unexpected birds flush.

Concerning hunting clothes and accessories, the less you can be reasonably comfortable with, the better. I hate making a trip with someone who spends more time fooling with gear than hunting.

Besides, I've learned that Charley's Principle is always working: No matter how much gear you own, you never have the right gear with you.





The Hunt

Bobwhite quail wake at dawn. After stretching and social greetings, they usually start walking toward their feeding grounds. If it is a wet, cold, or windy morning, the birds may not move for an hour or longer.

As the covey walks toward a feed patch, it puts out more scent than when huddled tightly at the roost. The quail scent spreads as the birds fan out to feed. They may move back together if they hear you coming, but sometimes they squat where they are.

Because the dogs find quail more easily after the birds have moved in the morning, most hunters like to hit the fields an hour or so after daybreak.

The birds mostly loaf through the middle of the day, dusting, preening, and scratching.

About 3:00 or 4:00 P.M., the covey is hungry again and begins to ramble toward a food supply. As sunset approaches, the covey moves to its roosting area.

Most hunters key in on these two periods of activity. They hunt from about one hour after sun-up until about 11:00 A.M. They lay up and rest their dogs through the middle of the day and hunt the last three hours of the afternoon.

Three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon, the easiest time to find quail,

is enough for most hunters. But the quail are always out there, and you can start at dawn and hunt until dusk, if you and the dogs can hold up.

A quail in agricultural country may have plenty of spots to feed on corn, peas, lespedeza, peanuts, millet, wheat, or milo. It may not take him long to fill his crop. A covey living in open woods country, however, may have to forage longer to find enough acorns, partridge peas, sassafrass, and other native feeds to satisfy his hunger.

During severe weather changes, or when a covey is put under constant hunting pressure, the daily pattern of feeding may change. Instead of loafing to a feed patch, the covey flies in, feeds quickly, and flies back to protective cover. The birds may feed during the middle of the day and again the last thirty minutes before dark, then fly to their roosting area.

Scenting conditions for the dogs are better the first three hours of the morning before the wind gets up and while moisture is close to the ground. Through the middle of the day, wind and sun dissipate the moisture. It may be warm and dry. Late in the afternoon, especially the last hour, scenting conditions may improve again.

The bobwhite quail ain't what it used to be. Forty years ago, you could find a covey way out in a soy-

bean field, far from cover. You could flush the covey in the open, shoot, and the birds would land in the field again where you could easily work the singles. Today, you'll be lucky if you have one or two coveys all year fan out and land in open broomsedge or grain stubble.

Hunting pressure, and to some degree changing agricultural patterns, have accelerated evolutionary changes in the habits of the birds by forced selective breeding. Generally, only the fastest, strongest, wariest bobwhite survive to breed the next spring. The birds that make it learn never to go far from escape cover; to fly to thick brambles; to seek dense swamps when flushed; to land in evergreen trees where they cannot be seen; to run ahead of the dogs rather than hold; to fly away from hunters in one direction but, as they clear a ridge, turn ninety degrees and fly 100 or 200 yards farther; and to get a tree between themselves and the hunters when they fly. The coveys that learn to flush 100 yards away when they hear a car door slam, or to flush and get out of there when another covey is shot at, are the ones that survive.

In the late fifties, I hunted a covey not far from the city limits of Greenwood, South Carolina, for three years and never killed a bird; I almost never got a shot. The covey flushed wild before the dogs got in scenting distance or we were in shooting range.

The quail did not land on the ground, but flew into a grove of thick cedars, perching in the evergreens where it was impossible to see them. We worked our way through the jungle and heard birds going out ahead of us. We seldom saw one, at least not long enough to raise a gun and shoot. The more we got skunked, the more I hated that covey. I kept thinking, "What if these birds scatter and educate other birds and breed with them?" If all quail were like this tree covey, we'd have to quit hunting. I would have gladly exterminated that covey, but they were too smart for me.

One theory in the South credits the change in quail behavior to an infusion of Mexican bobwhites. From 1910 until 1948, large numbers of subspecies *texanus* were stocked willy-nilly in the United States. According to Walter Rosene, the peak year was 1937 when permits for 250,000 quail were issued for shipment to the United States. Biologists believe there was a low survival in the released birds and that when they bred with native quail, their characteristics were dissipated.

According to Charley's Theory, the change in

bobwhite quail behavior is the result of forced selective breeding through hunting pressure. This theory has not been scientifically proven, but many old-timers have independently arrived at the same conclusion. It really isn't a case of our reactions slowing up.

But regardless, what you must know is where to find quail and what to do when you find them. Quail like edges! An edge occurs where two different types of vegetation come together, or where a plowed field borders a fencerow. No edge—no quail.

A covey which has moved into winter range needs feed, escape cover, loafing territory, roosting area, dusting places, and water. Quail can subsist on liquid from dew and rain puddles and are sometimes found in karst topography where there is no surface water such as ponds or creeks. However, they must have water. In semiarid parts of the bobwhite range, artificial ponds are sometimes built to attract quail, the same as quail feeders are built to entice coveys where food is short.

A quail likes diversified cover—weeds, thin broomsedge, bicolor lespedeza, a plum thicket, loose brush piles, fencerows, and spots with bare ground and overhanging cover. He wants it all mixed up, sloppy farming. He wants dense cover, such as a thick stand of small pines or a marsh, where he can fly when escaping hunters. The more broken up the cover, the more intermingled the plant species, then the more edge the quail has. The quail likes several sources of feed within or near the cover. If all his requirements are met, unless put under heavy hunting pressure, he doesn't move over a quarter or half mile during the hunting season. When you locate a covey in winter range, the chances are that you'll find it week after week. Also, a covey will be there the following season.

In learning to recognize quail habitat, you quickly learn what to eliminate. You start with the basic knowledge that a covey will never be found far from escape cover—mesquite trees, thick scrub oak, heavy brush, swamps, second-growth trees. Then consider food. A trainload of milo, corn, and cowpeas could be dumped in the middle of a large bare field, and quail would never go to it.

All factors of a habitat must be present. If there is one "limiting factor" or one missing factor in an area, then there are no quail. You can have the best cover in the world, but if there is no feed, there won't be any quail. In this case, feed is your limit-

ing factor. Without nesting cover in the spring, the birds will move and the quail population goes down. Although the hunter is interested in quail primarily during the hunting season, a limiting factor any time of year can reduce the quail population.

Typical field situations to eliminate follow: Do not hunt the middle of a pasture, although its edge next to a woods may be hunted; do not hunt the center of a 100-acre cornfield, but do hunt the border circled by cover; do not hunt the middle of a huge field grown up in weeds, but do hunt the edge which touches a fencerow or abandoned field growing in pine or oak or other woods.

If you come to a stand of pine which is old enough to have formed a canopy to keep the sunlight from the ground, you will find little on the ground but pine needles. No annual or perennial feed or low-lying cover can grow. An undisturbed covey would not go there, so to hunt it would be a waste of time. However, a covey which would use the pine stand for escape cover might be flushed in an adjoining field.

Normally, 50 to 100 yards into a big woods is adequate to locate quail as they usually work closer to the edge of a field. But a hunter may push quail from the edge of the woods or the edge of the field bordering it, 200 yards or more into the woods.

Let's say two experienced hunters are spot hunting with veteran dogs. They arrive at an abandoned field of twenty acres grown up in weeds and broomsedge and surrounded by second-growth trees. The dogs are put down, and they immediately circle the field, roughly following the edge, where the field meets the woods. The hunters remain at the vehicle.

If a covey has moved into the field to feed on weed seeds, the dogs will cut the trail, work it, and point. If the dogs do not locate scent, they return to the vehicle.

The hunters then have two choices. They can drive to another spot and start all over, or they can guess the covey is in the woods. If they choose the latter, they take the dogs into the woods and follow on foot as the dogs quarter ahead, working from the edge of the field to perhaps 50 to 100 yards into the woods and circling the field. If the covey is not found this time, they leave.

On the average, two hunters working two dogs at a time, will find from 50 to 60 percent of the birds in an area on a given day. On a cold, windy day, the coveys may be huddled tightly in brush piles,

and it is easy for the dogs to miss them. Luck plays a part. When a covey is not located after an area has been covered, even though the hunters "know" it is around, they usually prefer to keep moving and look for another covey.

Open woods shooting is different from hunting agricultural land. An open wood, with scattered pines or oak, has no solid canopy of leaves. Sunlight touches the ground and native plants, such as partridge pea, can grow. If the land is managed for quail, patches of milo, corn, millet, cowpeas, or other foods will be planted to attract the birds and to increase their food supply to get them through the winter. In the Deep South, part of the land is burned each March or April to keep down second-growth plants, to keep the briars under control, and to regenerate native feed plants.

Where huge tracts of open woods are hunted, the hunters usually follow the dogs with a vehicle or on horseback. If the open woods is not under management and the quail have to depend on native foods such as acorns and weed seeds, they will not be as numerous as in broken-up farm land. The quail ramble more and are harder to find. It may not be productive if you hunt on foot; you simply cannot cover enough land in a day to find sufficient coveys to keep you happy.

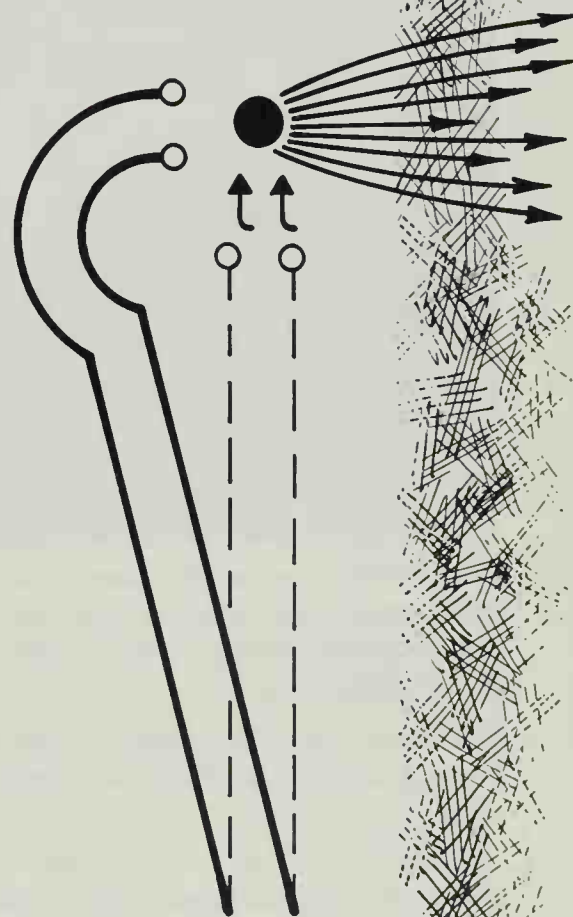
This same area will winter more quail if kept under continuous management; native foods are increased by burning or disking, and feed patches are planted. Nevertheless, a huge tract of open woods is hard to cover on foot, and nearly all hunters use vehicles. Generally, the person who has paid for management wants to put up a lot of coveys in a day; he covers a lot of acres by following dogs in a vehicle.

Food for quail is usually abundant during the early part of the hunting season. There are weed seeds, acorns, berries, fruits, and planted crops such as legumes and cereals. However, as the season goes on, rain, frost, bacteria, and other factors diminish the food supply. January through April, before the new vegetation and insects come out, is a critical time. A patch of millet which was excellent feed in November may be rotted or gone in January.

Where quail are managed, the operators plant feeds which will not deteriorate on the ground but provide late winter feed. For instance, bicolor lespedeza seeds are hard and do not rot quickly, often lasting from one season to the next. The quail may not feed on bicolor in November, when there's

Woods Border

Woods Border



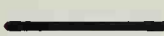
Quail Covey



Dog



Wrong Approach



Correct Approach



Bobwhite quail are nearly always close to edges, where two types of vegetation come together. This rail fence between two agricultural fields, with a row of weeds, brush and trees, is an ideal place to look for quail. The hunter will have tough shooting when the birds flush because limbs will partially block him. If he forgets about the limbs and shoots, he can still knock down a bird or two.

easier picking from milo spilled by a mechanical harvester, but in February when the milo has rotted, the quail will eat the bicolor.

Bobwhite quail eat quantities of foods in hundreds of combinations. They pass up toxic foods such as crotalaria and coffee weed. What quail will eat on a given day is unpredictable. In the morning, the crops of all the birds you kill may bulge with milo; in late afternoon, the crops may be filled with such native foods as sassafras, partridge peas, acorns, and pine mast. Nearly always a few greens will be found there. Quail eat some greens year-round, and I never pass by any type of winter greens near cover without sending the dogs to check it.

To describe all of the various conditions of feed

and cover which you will encounter is impossible. An experienced hunter can quickly show you what to look for and what to eliminate in the field. Two or three trips with him will give you more practical information than reading a thousand pages on habitat.

You will have no difficulty learning the agricultural plants quail feed on, but it will take a special effort to learn the native foods. Each time you locate a covey, try to remember the conditions of food and cover and the time. A guiding principle in locating coveys in the hunting season is that quail are never far from a food source and are always close to escape cover.

Two major feeding periods when the birds are

moving are early morning and late afternoon. These times usually coincide with the best scenting conditions for the dogs.

There are many exceptions, so stay loose. Many outdoorsmen are firm believers in the moon tables which may indicate periods of peak activity in fish and wildlife. If I am taking a rest during the middle of the day and suddenly I notice that the songbirds, doves, hawks, and squirrels have become active, I get up and go hunting. The quail are likely to be active and easier to find.



I wish I could give you hard and fast rules, but I cannot. Many years ago, I was entertaining a prominent editor of an outdoor magazine. I was anxious to show him a good hunt. The afternoon before he arrived, I took the dogs and checked the locations of thirteen coveys I had hunted. I did not shoot the birds, simply flushed them.

The next morning was bright and crisp, a perfect day to be hunting. I could hardly wait to be a hero by putting the editor on covey after covey. We didn't find a bird all morning!

My regular hunting buddy showed up at noon and made life miserable for me. That afternoon, the three of us hunted the same area with the same dogs. We picked up one covey after another,

clickety-click. Nothing to it. We found all thirteen coveys. They both leaned on me unmercifully. The more I tried to explain my morning debacle, the harder they laughed.

That's quail hunting—unpredictable. Even when you know where the coveys are ranging, they are not always easy to find. You simply put the odds on your side by hunting at favorable times in habitat ideal for quail.

Another factor enters. Although scenting conditions may *seem* to be good to a human, they may be difficult for the dogs. One of Charley's Laws says that only the dogs can tell what the true scenting conditions are.

Before we shoot too many quail on this trip, let's discuss the composition of the hunting party. The perfect combination is two pointing dogs and two hunters. There are definite reasons.

Although I sometimes hunt alone, it is never by preference. If I make a great shot, I want someone to see it and compliment me. If I frequently miss, I want a companion who will listen to my excuses. I want someone to share the hunt with because, to me, quail hunting is a sociable happening.

It is not always easy to find a hunting partner who likes to hunt the same way I do, who is compatible, and also who thinks more of my skin than a quail's. I want to know he is absolutely safe with his gun and will not shoot me or my dog.

I like to hunt with a buddy who's a little better shot than I am and who knows more about quail hunting than I do. I hope to learn from his experience, and his excellent shooting helps keep me on the ball. I prefer to think of him as half of the shooting team rather than a keen competitor. The success of the trip cannot be judged by whether we get a limit or not. One of my most memorable days was in an unexpected snowstorm in south Georgia when the birds completely outwitted us and we got a grand total of one.

Any old-timer could write a book on hunting companions. Each hunter must learn the way he prefers to hunt and with whom. Charley's Law says that the older you get, the more particular you are with whom you choose to hunt.

With today's brush-loving quail, you cannot hunt a half day without one hunter having to go into a dense thicket to flush quail with little chance of being able to raise his gun and shoot through the jungle. The other partner stays outside where he hopes to get a fairly open shot. This is one of the practical reasons why two can hunt better



There's no doubt that this flushing covey of quail is headed toward the escape cover of the woods. With today's changing quail, to find a single landing in the open is rare.

than one.

Three hunters are one too many. Four hunters are impossible. You may say you'll alternate in twos, but that never works for long. You get a couple of coveys scattered, and suddenly you have four hunters beating the brush.

With experience, you can predict how a covey of quail or a single will flush under a given cover situation. You will be right most of the time but not all of the time. Please remember that you can never drive quail! A flushing quail goes where he wants to go, not where you want him to go!

A single will let you walk past him and then flush out. You have to turn 180 degrees to shoot. Where was your shotgun muzzle pointed when you turned? Where are your hunting partners? Are you safe to shoot? If there are three or four of you in the brush, you don't know. You balk and the bird gets away.

Let's say the dogs point a single in wire grass in

an open section of a piney woods. As you walk in, you "know" the quail will flush and go directly ahead of you. Perhaps he will most of the time, but this time he flies back towards you. Where are your partners? You're not sure, so you can't shoot.

One other hunter is absolutely all you can keep track of in a day. You must be certain where he is every instant. You never know when you may walk into a single or a covey that the dogs missed.

With only one hunting partner, you will seldom hunt for a half day that you don't have to hold off on a shot because a bird swung too close to him, or on a skimmer which lined up with a dog.

It is all two hunters can do to keep track of each other in brush, even if both are wearing daylight fluorescent orange and constantly hollering at one another. With a third and fourth hunter, it becomes impossible. You may not shoot one of them, but you will have to pass up many chances at quail simply because you don't know where they are. In



The lone hunter gets ready to move past the lead dog and kick the quail up. The two pointers behind are honoring the front dog's covey find, but all three dogs are getting a strong scent. The front pointer's tail is moving, a sign that he needs to move a little closer and get more scent before he locks up. In a cover situation like this, nine times out of ten, the covey will flush into the woods. The hunter will be wise not to decide ahead of time where the quail will fly, but stay loose and adapt to the situation as it develops.

quail hunting, if you balk, you miss!

Two dogs are better than one simply because they cover more ground. This does not mean that four dogs are twice as good as two. Two dogs are easy to handle and keep in sight. You can keep them under control and know what they're doing all the time. If you have three well-mannered dogs, perhaps you can hunt them at the same time, but three is the limit.

It's fun to put five or six dogs down and let them hunt together. But let's say one dog finds a covey. One of the other dogs will get jealous and try to steal his point; or one is not under control and busts in and puts the birds up before you are in range; or, if you're hunting a pack on singles, two dogs will go on point a hundred yards apart. When you shoot one single, the other dog gets jumpy

and flushes his bird.

Two hunters and a pair of dogs down at one time is the most efficient way to hunt. You can pick up and move to another area faster. Two hunters can quickly settle a disagreement on tactics. Three hunters are a committee, and four a legislative assembly.

I'd like to mention one "exception." If you are new to quail hunting, follow two experienced hunters in the field, *without* a shotgun. Stay close behind the hunters all of the time, or wherever they ask you to stay. Watch how the coveys and singles flush and how the hunters shoot. Mostly, watch the quail. These will be the best two or three days of experience you can get.

You'll be surprised how slowly the birds fly when you don't have a gun. If fifteen birds get up



This hunter moves up on a brace of setters in a scrub oak to position himself in case the covey gets jumpy and flies before his buddy gets up into shooting stance. When dogs go on point, hunters should get up with them as quickly and safely as they can.

together, the last bird will be out of range in 3 to about 3.8 seconds. Without a gun, it seems that the hunters have plenty of time. They do! Later, when you carry a gun for the first time, it will seem like the birds disappear in half a second.

By making a couple of trips without a gun, you'll convince yourself that you have time to deliberately get off two or three shots on a covey rise. Rushing the first shot, because you know you're running out of time, is one of the main reasons for missing. Also, by going with the veterans, you'll know what to expect overall when you do take a gun. Once you put gun in hand, you become so concerned with marksmanship that you forget to learn other necessary things.

When a trained pointer runs with head held high and gets a nose full of hot quail scent, he instantly puts on brakes and stops. He remains still until his nose tells him how far the birds are ahead of him. The intensity of the scent, not his sight, tells him. If he is close to the birds, he freezes, his nose like a searching antenna pointed in the direction of the hottest and most intense scent.

If the scent is not hot when he cuts the trail, he slows and begins to sniff intently at the ground or the layer of air just above the ground. His tail wiggles, and he quarters the ground in small, fast steps, anxious to home in on the birds. As the scent gets hotter, his tail wags faster. All of a sudden he stops, the tail locks, and he leans a little forward. He is on the birds and dares not take one more step for fear he will scare the birds into flight.

The second dog moves in carefully. If he is properly trained, he recognizes that the first dog gets the glory of the covey find. The second pointer honors or backs the point. He comes up behind the first dog—as long as he stays to the rear, he is honoring. If he passes the first dog, he is guilty of stealing a point. Dogs are taught to honor or back for a practical reason, not just for style or show. The first dog has moved as close to the birds as he dares without flushing them; if the second dog passes him, the birds will flush and the hunters may not be ready or in range.

When a dog shows signs of making game by slowing his speed, lowering his nose, and wagging his tail faster, the rule of thumb for the hunter is to get the hell up there. The dog may accidentally bump the birds which means he may inadvertently get too close and scare the birds into flight. And you miss a covey chance because you are not yet in shooting range.

Crosswinds and other factors can cause an experienced dog to bump a single or covey. A green dog may do it through inexperience or because he is not fully broken. The birds simply may get jumpy, through no mistake of either dog, and decide to hightail it. The quail may decide to start walking rather than squatting and holding. As the birds move, the dogs creep forward, anxious not to lose or flush them. But if one bird gets itchy and launches, the other birds follow.

Once your dogs give you an indication that birds are close, you and your partner should get with them as fast as you safely can. Don't run; move in a fast, positive walk. You can't shoot well huffing and puffing after a 100-yard dash. If following the dogs in a vehicle, stop twenty or thirty yards from them, take your guns down, load them, and walk quickly towards the dogs, prepared to shoot if the birds unexpectedly flush.

Old-timers are loaded with stories about letting the dogs hold. They see the dogs making game and pointing 200 yards away. They sit down and smoke a cigarette and then amble up to the dogs, which hold staunchly and patiently. It makes a good story, but they're hunting quail of forty years ago, and I'm hunting today's bobwhite quail!

The sooner you catch up to indicating dogs, the fewer chances you miss. If you want to smoke a cigarette and make your dogs hold, do it while you're ten feet behind them. Then, if the birds flush, you're in range to shoot.

I used to hunt with an old codger who told lengthy tales, ones that never seemed to end or have much point when they did. The dogs never pointed unless he was right in the middle of one of those interminable stories. He was very much offended if I wanted to break the story off and go and shoot quail. He'd grab me by the shoulder and say, "This'll only take a minute." Five minutes later we'd be standing there, fifty yards out of position, and up the covey would go. There were two reasons I never lost my temper and shot him: he had the best bird dogs in the state, and he was my boss. He's been dead for more than a decade and may God rest his soul. I am certain that he is not yet in heaven, but standing at the Pearly Gates telling St. Peter bird dog stories.

When the dogs make game or go on point, get up there with them, but plan your approach. You cannot drive quail, but you can size up the terrain and cover and guess which direction the birds will fly when they flush. Try to put yourself in the most



Even a person who had never been hunting before would instantly realize this pointer and setter are locked on birds. The quail were found feeding in a strip of grain sorghum.

favorable shooting angle without being blocked by trees.

Let's say you and your buddy are hunting a partly grazed pasture of a 100-acre rectangle surrounded by second-growth trees. You suspect a covey may be feeding on Kobe or Korean lespedeza seeds and greens. You are walking 15 yards from the border, headed north, as the dogs quarter the edge between the pasture and the woods, to the east or on your right.

The dogs go on point 100 yards ahead of you. The birds are apparently about 15 yards into the pasture. When the birds flush, you would not expect them to swing west and fly across the open field. Cover is 300 yards to the north end of the field; you would neither expect them to fly down the edge that far, nor fly south, back across you. The obvious flight path is east into escape cover which is only 15 yards away. In this particular situation, it is safe to say that 95 out of 100 coveys would fly east, immediately into cover. You assume they will fly east, but do not lock your mind on this as an absolute certainty. We'll get to mental problems later, but remember this strategy for now.

If the two of you, line abreast, walk straight north, down the edge to the dogs, you will flush the birds, but you will not be in the best tactical spot when the birds go up. You will be facing north, but the birds will immediately fly east, or take off north and quickly cut back east to safety. This means your shots will be wide-angle leads, 50 to 90 degrees of deflection. By approaching this way, you give yourself tough shots for beginners—

quail that require the maximum amount of leading and gun swinging.

In addition, you may have handicapped the hunter who is on the west side of your line abreast. When the birds flush east, the hunter toward the inside of the field may be able to shoot only one shot or none at all because all of the birds will be on the other hunter's side. The hunter on the left cannot shoot because the hunter on the right is too near the line of fire.

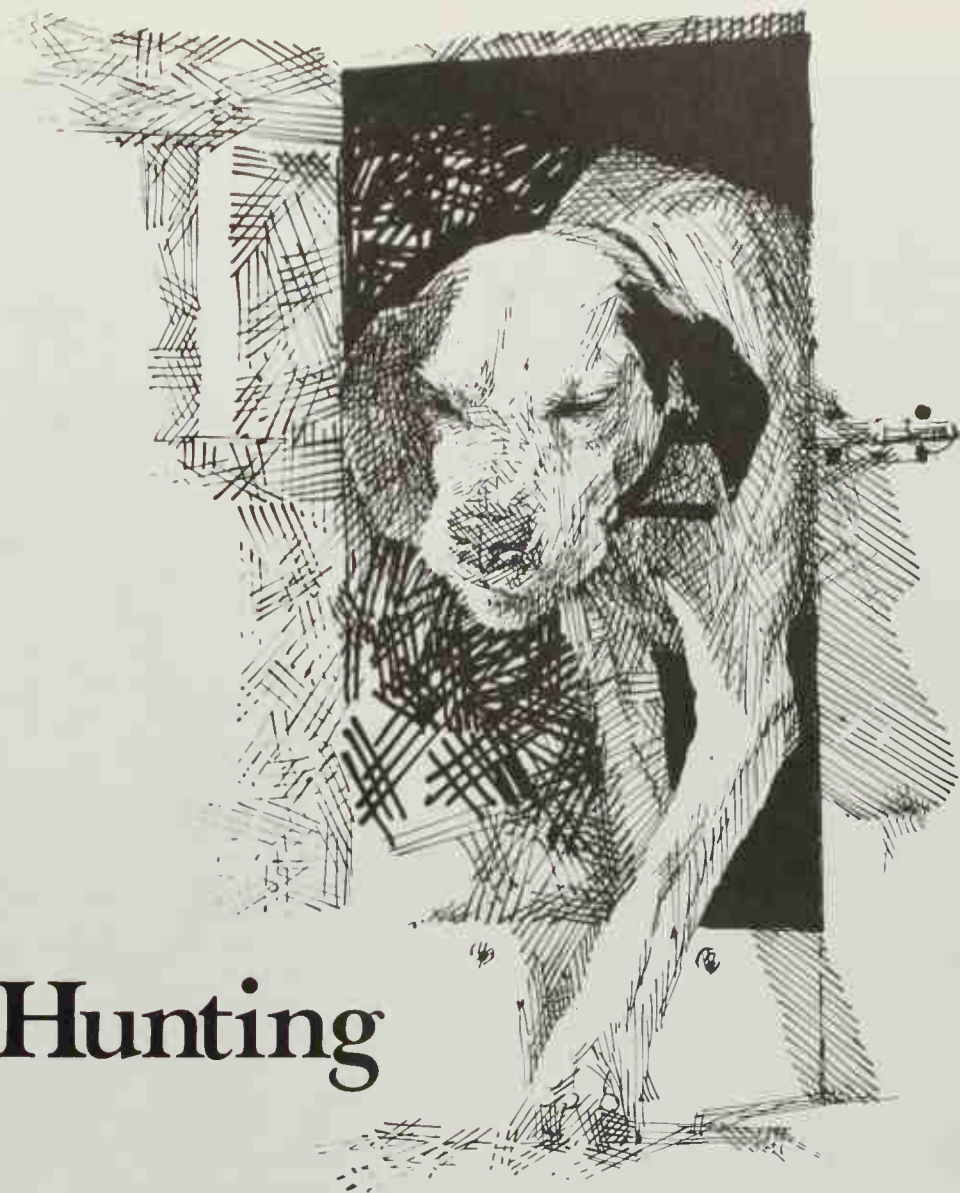
The correct approach for this field situation is for the hunters, when they see the dogs on point, to swing to the northwest, out into the pasture. When they are even with the dogs, they turn east and walk east for the flush. When the birds flush, they fly essentially east, and the two shooters get straight-away shots or shots with not much angle. For most hunters, these shots are much easier than 50 to 90-degree angles.

With this approach, one shooter does not block another. Both guns are on the firing line for maximum fire power. You need it! You do not know how many shots you will get in a given day: you cannot afford to lose chances by approaching coveys tactically out of position.

To emphasize this last statement, suppose you approached the covey from the woods walking and facing west, the worst direction. The quail would fly back over your heads, between you, and around the flank in their anxiety to reach the closest cover. If you were new shooters, you'd be in utter confusion; any birds you shot at would be difficult targets.

While you always want to immediately get up with the dogs when they begin making game or point, a quick detour may put you in a better position to shoot escaping quail. Base your approach on the cover to place yourself in the most favorable shooting position.

Two old hunting companions will do it automatically on each point with hardly ever a word said. With years of experience, they are able to size up each cover situation as they start toward the dogs. They know that quail would rather fly downhill than up; in a strong cross wind, a bird tends to go downwind; and an escaping quail always seeks cover. With time in the field, a beginner soon learns to estimate the situation, but nobody gets perfect or bats a thousand. The bobwhite quail frequently does the unexpected when put under pressure, but that's one of its biggest attractions. Charley's Law says you only know what a quail is going to do for sure after he does it.



More on Hunting

The greatest thrill in bobwhite quail hunting is the sudden explosion of a covey as two hunters walk past pointing dogs. The whirring confusion of thirty wings trying to break the sound barrier is frightening.

It's part of the quail's defense. Even such a brave warrior as Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower admitted the covey flush rippled his cool and ruffled his shooting. He depended mostly on singles to get his limit when he hunted with quail plantation owners in Georgia.

Once you hear a rattlesnake buzz, you never forget it. The same impression is made on the brain by the roaring flush of bobwhite. Though you might not hear a rattler or quail covey for ten years, the instant you hear either again, your mental computer recognizes it and the adrenalin starts flowing.

Frankly, the first covey flush of each hunting season panics me. Even though I know almost to the instant when the first covey will flush, I am never quite ready for the shattering burst of fifteen brown bodies hurtling into space. I am always glad to get it over, and by the second or third covey

I ease back into my frame and settle down for the season.

You will think I'm trying to kid you when I go through in sequence what you must remember and do as you approach dogs on point, flush a covey, and shoot. Let's begin with the ideal situation of two pointers locked on a covey in an open pine woods with dense escape cover about thirty-five yards away. Your buddy owns one dog and you own the other.

As you come up behind the dogs, mentally note whose dog found the covey and how well the other dog is honoring the point. As you stride past the dogs, notice how stylishly and staunchly the dogs are pointing. Whirr! Fifteen quail flush! You have less than four seconds before the birds are out of range. Mount your gun; instantly select a bird; swing your gun; catch up with the bird; and as you start to pass, pull the trigger. Follow through from the momentum of your swing and note whether or not you hit the bird. Did it fold like a dishrag or did you miss it? If you hit it, remember the position of the bird and swing to another for your sec-



Part of a covey goes up, spreads, and scoots for cover. The hunter, in an ideal position—about as close to the birds as he could get without stepping on them—has time to get off three shots. The pointer on the right has remained fairly steady to the flush, but the one on the left has broken and wants to be under a bird when it's dropped.

ond shot. If you missed it, decide whether to fire a second shot at the same bird or swing to another.

Meanwhile, keep track of how many shots your buddy is getting off. Is he hitting any and are they dropping? If you are both shooting down the middle, you may be shooting at the same bird. Your buddy may be a claimer. Remember everything that is happening so you are prepared to win any claiming stakes which may develop.

When you select a second bird, another, easier bird may loom in front of you. You swing to it and fire. If you hit it solidly, note where the bird will drop. If you winged it, a third shell may be necessary to drop it. Decisions, decisions. What are the dogs doing? Is your companion's dog retrieving your first bird to his master? Is your dog out in front fetching, or is he holding steady to wing and shot? That makes two shots your buddy has fired.

The quail are scooting for the thicket and you

are running out of time. You choose another bird, swing to catch up with it, see the bird dart up to clear the top of the trees, so increase the speed of your swing, and hear your buddy's third shot, as you pull ahead of your quail and pull the trigger. You note whether or not the bird dropped, glance at the dogs to see what they are doing and check your buddy to see if he is trying to put one of your birds in his game bag. But wait, there is more!

You are watching to see where all of the scattering birds fly. Some split to the left, some fly down the center, and some spread to the right. You have to watch the birds to see where they go, the dogs to see if they are eating the shot birds, picking them up, or bringing them partway back and dropping them; and you have to reload quickly to catch a straggler, or tail-end Charley, from the covey which didn't get up and now suddenly whirrs out.

That is a lot of gyrations and memorizing for



The eager young pointer pup flushed these quail in the palmettos, not quite where the young lad expected them. But still in close position to the birds, the lad knocked one down after missing his first shot.

less than four seconds. But plenty of quail hunters do it. They'll even tell you what you did wrong to miss *your* shots.

If I knocked one or two birds down on the covey rise, I get so excited I forget to watch where the singles scatter. Of course this is where it pays to have developed good retrieving dogs. They help mark shot birds. A pointing dog which "hunts dead," close in where you want him, will quickly find dead or crippled birds.

Even though you solidly fold a quail, it is so perfectly camouflaged when it falls in any cover, that it is hard to see. No sportsman likes to leave a crippled bird, but he has small chance of finding them, dead or crippled, without dogs. A lot of time is lost in a hunt by not having a good "dead bird" dog.

Some hunters train their dogs to be steady to wing and shot. This means the dogs hold their

points when the quail flush and do not move until the handler commands. This is stylish and will get you many compliments but takes a lot of training. Most hunters let their dogs break. The dogs stay staunchly on point until the hunters stride past them. The dogs move up with the hunters or past them and as the birds flush, they move out with the quail. Sometimes the dogs almost catch the first bird which drops. They are right on top of falling birds and don't give runners a chance to get away.

As the dogs would rather go in with the hunters than hold after the hunters pass, most hunters let them do it. Also, they want the dogs to pick up shot birds in a hurry to finish this chore and be free to follow the singles. Hunters believe they lose fewer shot birds this way.

Learning how to walk past dogs on point and kick up a covey of quail seems to be difficult for

many new hunters. They tend to get blocked by brush and get out of position. They flank out 20 to 40 feet from the pointing dogs and then stop and wait. I have never figured out what they are waiting for. The dogs have been trained to hold, but the hunters act as though they're hunting over flushing dogs. The hunters must be praying that the birds will fly while they have an open shot and are all set. They need to crash past the dogs and flush the quail, at least partly controlling the situation.

Let's go through the proper approach, the one which will put the odds on your side. Two of you are cruising an open blackjack woods in a Scout. Your two setters go on point 100 yards ahead of you. As quickly as you safely can, drive to within 20 to 30 yards of the dogs, behind them. Get out of the vehicle, take your shotguns from the racks, and load them. You have two basic problems. First, the birds may flush at any minute before you reach the dogs. Be prepared for this. Second, be as close as possible to the quail when they flush. Most coveys will hold until you pass the dogs and scare the birds up. You want above all else to walk the covey up.

The reason a hunter does not kill more quail is the time-distance problem. The quail flies out of range, too far for you to continue shooting at it. At a distance of 40 yards, a quail is out of range for your choke and is probably in thick cover where you can hardly see him. Any way you want to say it, the bird flew too far or you ran out of time. Time and distance are the same.

In quail shooting, time always runs out. If a covey flushes wild 30 yards ahead, you may get off one shot before it is out of range. If a covey flushes 15 or 20 yards ahead, you will have time for one shot and possibly a second. But suppose you walk in and stomp the covey up. They start from 2 to 5 yards from you. You have time to fire three shots before the last bird is out of range.

Flushing coveys or singles yourself puts time on your side because that's as close as you can get to them. You and your buddy walk past those two pointing setters with a positive stride and confident attitude. Don't tiptoe in on those birds; bust in like you are stomping fire ants. Quail shooting is like shooting craps. You gotta believe! If you don't have faith, you're going to roll that old acey deucey.

One hunter loads his gun while the other fumbles. He gets to about 10 feet behind the dogs,

then waits for the laggard. The birds can go up at any time. If they do flush, at least one shooter is in position.

The hunter who gets in too much of a hurry is liable to make mistakes. This includes mistakes which can kill a buddy or a dog. A few times in the field, running is actually necessary. If I shoot a triple, I may run all the way back to town to tell everyone. But most of the time, a fast, positive stride is best when you need to move quickly.

The basic safety rule in shotgun shooting is to never let your gun muzzle point at anything you do not want to shoot. Follow this rule in your home, your vehicle, and while hunting, and you will not kill anyone or blast a hole through your garage or car. Even if your gun goes off, there will be no damage if the muzzle is not pointed at anything you don't want to shoot.

Let's say you're the first to leave the Scout and head toward the setters. Do not point the shotgun barrel at the ground ahead of you. If it accidentally went off, you might wipe out a dog or two. Point the barrel above the horizon. A right-handed shooter holds the grip of the stock in the right hand, the stock about hip level. With the safety on, the trigger will not pull.

Walk positively and confidently toward the front dog, belly forward. At any instant the covey may flush. You will have time to get the gun up and fire one or two shots before the birds are out of range. As you go forward, study the cover ahead. Make sure that the cover between you and the dogs does not block you at any time if the quail suddenly flush.

Some zig-zagging may be necessary. From the action of the front dog and the direction of his nose, guess where the covey is squatting. Glance at the cover beyond the birds and guess the most likely escape path of the quail, but do not lock your mind on this guess.

When you get about 10 feet from the dog nearest you, the one backing, stop and wait for your buddy. Don't yell at him to hurry as this may scare the covey up. Stand relaxed, but ready to mount your gun if the birds go. When your hunting companion reaches you, the two of you walk line abreast to come from behind the front setter and pass on either side in the direction of its pointing nose. Ideally, you would be about 10 to 15 feet from your buddy with the front dog in the middle. Your gun muzzle is above the horizon, the safety on.

When even with the dog's head, you know you're



Two meat dogs indicate a covey of quail in thick cover. The hunter, using a pump shotgun, knows the setter has the birds and the pointer in the background is honoring. Ready to walk in and stomp up the birds, the hunter has the muzzle high. When he raises the stock, the muzzle will come down and point at about the height he first focuses on the birds.

close to the quail. Your head is erect, eyes pointed toward the horizon but not focused there. Never, never look down in an attempt to see the birds on the ground. Most of the time you cannot see them. Even if you could, you do not want to. Your eyes would be focused on the ground, your neck and head pulled downward and you would lose a fraction of a second mounting your gun. Worse, there is a tendency to get hypnotized watching birds on the ground. A bird you see on the ground is always tougher to hit than one you don't see.

Focus your eyes about 15 yards ahead, aiming at the horizon. Until you pass the front dog, you have been walking belly forward. But now, unless the dogs are lying, you know a covey is coming up any instant. Go into a sideways step, left side forward. If the left leg is forward when the quail flush, a fraction of a second is saved. The ideal foot position at the time of shooting is both feet flat, about a foot apart, with weight evenly

distributed and the body leaning slightly toward the quail.

At this time, the stock comes up to where the butt is about level with the armpit; the muzzle is still above the horizon. The gun is *not* cheeked, that is, the comb of the stock tucked snugly under the cheekbone in shooting position. Do not mount the gun all the way until a covey is heard or seen. Never move the safety to off, so the trigger will pull, unless a bird is seen or heard in the air.

Place the forefinger on the safety, ready to move it. On covey rises over pointing dogs, and usually on singles, the *sound* of the birds rising triggers your reflexes, not the sight of the birds. Singles sometimes fly out quietly, but most of them make the characteristic whirr.

With the forefinger on the safety, the muzzle above the horizon, and the stock butt at armpit level, look straight ahead toward the horizon. At the instant the birds flush, all that must be done is



The front pointer has the covey, the second pointer is backing or honoring, and the two hunters walk in, close by the dogs. The muzzles are pointed up; if a gun goes off, the shot can't hit a dog or person. As they walk past the front dog, the covey will flush. Both hunters will be in excellent position, close to the birds, and each should have time to get off three shots.

to raise the comb of the stock to the cheekbone, the butt nestled closely in the V of the shoulder. The muzzle has to come down when the stock goes up. The muzzle will be pointed at the horizon. The quail, when eyes focus on them, will be near the horizon, just below or just above.

Keep both eyes open while shooting. Closing one eye is a handicap, so why do it? The peripheral vision of both eyes is needed to see all the points discussed in the first part of this chapter. All of the best skeet, trap, and game shots shoot with both eyes open, not with one open and one closed.

You cannot walk from several yards behind the dogs to pass them in order to flush the birds with the gun fully mounted. Your vision is blocked and you are liable to trip. Walking with the gun fully

mounted is not safe or comfortable, puts a strain on the body, and builds up tension. So, learn to stay relaxed until the instant your motor responses are triggered by the sound of flushing birds. For a brief fraction of a second, you have a clear view of the field ahead as you push the safety off and mount your gun.

You cannot shoot well unless you mount the gun in the same position each time. The cheekbone and V in the shoulder are your guide points. Practice mounting your gun at home, starting either from the stock in hip position or stock at armpit level. It helps! If you practice on handtrap targets or at the skeet field, do not call for the target with the stock fully cheeked. Learn to mount the gun only after you hear the sound of the trap releasing the clay target or see the target flying. This will



As a flushing covey spreads, the lady is in perfect position to shoot and then get off one or two more shots at birds on her side. The man is slightly out of position. He must swing to his right to shoot birds essentially on his side.



help imprint your mental computer so that mounting the gun as a quail flies will be an automatic reflex. Skeet shooters will try to talk you into calling for skeet targets with your gun fully mounted. They only think of score and it's hard for most of them to understand that someone might wish to learn the fundamentals of field shooting with the convenient aids of a skeet field.

The two setters are still holding. You and your buddy move positively ahead of the dogs. Whirr! Fifteen birds explode and fan out, scooting for escape cover!

Panic!

The worst fright of my life occurred when I was about nine years old. I was magnetized toward a wizened old woman who lived on the edge of town. It was whispered about the community that she

had great conjuring powers and cast spells at night. Although I was afraid to speak to her, or even walk in her yard, I spied on her to see if I could catch her talking with spirits or witches.

On this particular night, I had not seen anything but eerie candlelight from her shack. Since a summer storm was about to break, I decided to take a shortcut home through a cemetery. As I wound my barefoot way between the tombstones, I suddenly stepped in the center of a roosting covey of quail. There was a shattering crack of sound, and I felt the warm air of the covey on my legs. The spirits of the conjure woman had grabbed me to pull me down into mystical depths. I screamed and dashed madly to get out of the cemetery, bursting through a patch of blackberries and a hog-wire fence, slicing flesh and clothes in my animal panic.

For fear something was gaining on me, I did not dare look back until I reached my front porch.

This experience was so embedded in my central nervous system that I could hardly stay calm the following fall as I walked in to flush quail with a shotgun. I knew the quail would not charge and attack me, but when a covey erupted I lost a second recovering my poise. Yet I was drawn as irresistibly toward covey after covey as I had been to spy on the conjure woman.

There is nothing that will get you used to a covey flush except flushing more coveys!

The biggest problem for the new hunter on the covey rise is deciding which bird to shoot and sticking with that decision. A Law of Charley's states that on a covey rise, no sooner do you start to shoot one quail than another looms up as big and as slow as a blimp.

But you have to quickly pinpoint one bird and stay with it because you will never kill a quail simply shooting at the flock. I know! I've tried flock shooting geese, ducks, doves, and quail and have never killed one yet this way.

Concentrate all of your mental powers on one bird at a time and will its destruction. When fifteen birds go up, you must force yourself to focus on *one*. Stay with it and shoot!

Beginning hunters often are obsessed with getting doubles or triples. They want to become heroes before graduating from kindergarten. They are much better off to intensely concentrate on one bird and do their best to knock it down, even if they must fire all three shots at it. Nothing gives a hunter confidence like bagging a bird. The more confident a hunter becomes, the more quail he kills.

In the southwestern part of the bobwhite quail range, a covey may flush from low-lying bush cover and silhouette itself clearly on the horizon long enough for three open shots per hunter. This seldom happens in other parts of the bobwhite range. In thick second-growth cover, the birds may disappear in 30 yards or less. Triples are rare; they are events one remembers long after the easy but missed singles have been forgotten.

Before a new hunter can shoot doubles or triples, he must learn to shoot one bird at a time. Then, some fine fall morning, he will find himself smoothly shooting the first bird up from a covey and, with time on his hands, swinging to another and folding it.

Bobwhite quail are seldom found far from escape cover. In fact, dogs may point a covey huddled in

a plum thicket tangled so badly with grapevines and greenbriers it can hardly be penetrated. Quail are where they want to be, not where the hunter wants them to be.

The new hunter must learn to shoot through brush and trees. Don't worry about cutting a lot of timber. No farmer will charge stumpage. Forget about the trees and shoot!

Do you know how many pellets are in a 12- or 20-gauge shotgun shell? Well, I'm not going to tell you. Cut one open and count the shot. The number will amaze and encourage you. It takes from three to five pellets on the average to bring a quail down, the exceptions being when a single pellet breaks a wing bone, the neckbone, or cracks the cranium.

You have a lot of chances to get five pellets through dense brush to produce enough shock in a quail to bring it down. With practice, you can force yourself to forget about trees and brush. Just pretend they are not there!

You have to, or you run out of time. If a bird is flying in dense jungle and you see it headed toward a twenty-foot opening, don't wait for it to get to the opening; shoot when your muzzle catches up and starts to pass the bird. You have to do it this way, assuming you want to take the bird home and eat it.

If you balk and wait until the bird reaches the opening, your reaction time is not fast enough to shoot before it crosses the opening. You do not see the bird one foot into the clearing or even two feet. The bird, at its speed of 25 or 30 miles an hour, will be halfway across the opening before your brain registers that you see it. By the time you cheek your gun and swing, the quail will have flown through the clearing and be home free.

Ignore brush and trees and shoot covey rises or singles as though you were in a desert. Learning to do this is a must with today's quail, and matters may get worse the way quail are evolving. Some of the best practice you can get in brush and tree shooting is by calling crows in the off-season.

Let's go back to when you and your buddy pass those two patient setters to stomp up the covey. Let's say you went in on the right and your buddy took the left. Your left side is toward the flushing birds, or perhaps your stance is more comfortable with a part belly-forward approach. With either stance, you should be able to swing your shotgun



The dogs missed this covey, and the hunters walked right into it. Since they are side by side, they each know where the other is, and won't balk about shooting.

in an arc of 150 to 180 degrees without moving your feet, depending on how stiff your old backbone is.

Suppose the birds are not quite where you thought they were on the ground, and they all flush or immediately swing to the left on your partner's side. What do you do?

You shoot, as long as you are safe and do not blast your friend's eardrums. You *know* his position! You walked in with head erect, he was in your peripheral vision, and you heard his steps. When the birds come up, you know how far you can swing to your left and not only be safe, but not scare the hell out of him. Believe me, he cannot shoot well if he is worried about you cutting his earlobe off.

The traditions of quail hunting, stemming from the days when there were more birds and fewer hunters, are graciously perpetuated by the landed gentry. They have access to large acreage with numerous coveys. One might shoot down the middle in a covey rise, but he dare not shoot 10 degrees on the other's side. When a dog finds a single, one hunter walks in to take a shot while the other relaxes and courteously stands back to watch.

Perhaps their land holds the maximum in quail production, two birds per acre. They know they will find plenty of birds, so they can afford to be polite. However, this is not true of guys like you and me. We are glad to hunt land which has two or three coveys per hundred acres, or one bird every two or three acres. We have to work hard for each shot, never knowing how many we will get in a

given day. We cannot afford to pass up chances by being overly polite. We have to be safe, but we have to take the shots as they develop in the field.

Consider two hunters 15 feet apart in the center of an imaginary giant clock. They are looking toward 12:00, the direction a covey is expected to flush. All of the birds fly towards 1:00. Both shooters can safely fire. But suppose the birds flared towards 3:00? Then the hunter on the left could not shoot because he would be firing too close to his buddy.

If the birds spread down the middle, from 11:00 to 1:00, the shooter on the left would normally take those between 11:00 and 12:00; the shooter on the right would usually take those between 12:00 and 1:00. However, there would be nothing wrong if either lapped across the imaginary centerline towards high noon.

When two hunters walk up a covey, it is not unusual for one hunter to get blocked by trees or perhaps suddenly blinded from looking into the sun; yet the birds flush out his side. The other hunter should shoot, as long as he knows he's safe.

When following singles and the dogs point, both hunters should walk in with the idea of taking a shot. The bird could go to the right, but the hunter could be blocked by a tree or be unable to shoot a skimmer because of a dog out front. The hunter on the left should feel free to shoot as long as he is clear. He doesn't have time to ask, "Joe, are you going to shoot?" The vanishing quail gains too much distance. You cannot hesitate and balk in quail shooting. You not only upset the smooth swing of your shotgun, you run out of time.

The only solution is for two hunters to agree *before* a hunt about shooting on the other's side. One reason that you see two friends hunting so many seasons together, with no desire to hunt with anyone else, is that they fully understand how the other will shoot. Each knows he is safe no matter what unexpected thing a quail does. They have a mutual agreement that either can shoot anytime each knows he is right—and safe. They know that at the end of a particular hunt, each will have had about the same number of shots.

Whenever you hunt with a person for the first time, politely ask him how he feels about crossing the dividing line. Get it all straight before the first dog goes on point.

There are two schools of thought on how soon to follow singles after the covey has been shot and scattered. One school immediately goes after them,

thinking that as soon as they're worked on, the hunters can go searching for another covey. The second school prefers to wait a few minutes to give the singles a chance to put out scent, making it easier for the dogs to locate them.

As a general rule, if the dogs are obviously working under good scenting conditions, the hunters should immediately follow up on the singles. If the weather is hot and dry and the dogs are having trouble locating birds, the hunters may want to take a break of five minutes or so before pushing on after singles.

A covey that flushes wild, without being shot at, may fly as a unit, the birds landing together. When your dogs find them, depending on how long it takes, the birds will come up as either a loose-knit or a tight covey. In any covey you shoot into, the birds will scatter. No definite pattern can be predicted. Watching where the singles go down and marking them gives you a big advantage. To do this is easily forgotten in the excitement of shooting the covey rise.

Depending on many conditions, the singles usually fly from 150 to 250 yards from where you busted the covey. If the birds land in low dense cover, thick at their eye level, they squat there for awhile. If they land in second-growth brush, bare at foot and eye level where the leaf canopy has blocked sunlight from the ground, the singles may do a little walking. Unless disturbed, they will not fly.

Always keep in mind that the bobwhite is a social bird. He likes company. Some of the birds will land close together. If you remain quiet and do not follow for ten to fifteen minutes, the birds usually will start calling their plaintive recall cry—Perlee, Perlee. This is especially true of the last covey of the afternoon. The birds anxiously begin calling, afraid they'll have to spend the night alone. Wise old bird dogs, with many seasons of hunting, often catch on to these calls and move in by sound until they get a strong scent.

Beginning hunters shoot better on singles than on the covey rise. They can concentrate on a lone bird getting up and don't have trouble deciding which bird to shoot.

When you follow the singles, it is imperative to have dogs that can be held in for close work and handled. The best tactic is to work the singles that land nearest you. Hold the dogs in close, make them quarter just ahead of you, and when they point, walk in and shoot. The dogs then quickly

retrieve the bird. If done properly, the birds ahead do not flush. Keep working slowly ahead, or to the side, taking the birds one at a time. If your dogs get excited and run wide, they'll miss birds, and they're likely to bust birds when no gunner is in range.

According to one of Charley's Laws, no matter how long you own a particular bird dog, deep down he will always believe he knows more about hunting quail than you do. He has to be reminded, sometimes with a piece of leather, that you are capable of marking down singles and have some working knowledge of quail tactics.



Whenever you shoot a covey rise, immediately reload your shotgun. There may be a straggler or two, especially if you caught the covey feeding and they were a little scattered when they flushed. This advice applies even more so to singles. As soon as you shoot and before you take another step, reload your gun. Singles tend to land close together or work back toward each other, and may be in groups of two to five or more birds. The sound of one bird flushing may trigger two more to fly. When you shoot, another quail may get up. When you take a couple of steps forward, a bobwhite you walked past may get up behind you.

How long do you work the singles from a covey? Let's say you just shot into a covey flush and the birds split generally into three groups and landed that way, as near as you can tell. After you have worked each of three areas and put up some birds in each, you're probably better off to find another covey. Try to get each single up once; then pull out. By this time the birds are so scattered that you'll have to hunt hard to find one bird, and you might as well expend the same energy finding fifteen—another covey. Of course there are excep-

tions. If you see where a single, up for the second time, went down, and it's a handy spot to get to, then follow up.

When you walk in past a pointing dog to kick up a single, the bird may stick very tight, especially if it's holding in dense cover. Take shorter steps than on a covey flush, sometimes kicking the grass or a brush pile. One principle is always the same: Be as close as possible to the single when it goes up! This gives you more time before you run out of distance.

Do not let your eyes stay focused on the ground. Naturally you have to look at the ground to keep from stepping in stump holes or stumbling over logs, but do not try to see the quail. Your ears will let you know when the bird comes up. Most of the time direct your eyes on the horizon. You'll shoot the bird just below or just above it. The horizon is also where you'll see an unexpected single which flushes wild.

When you and your buddy walk toward a dog pointing a single, the approach is usually the same as on a covey, one on either side and about five feet or so from the dog. Look the cover situation over and guess where the single will flush, but expect surprises.

No one can definitely decide every time how a covey or single will bust out. Maybe you can figure it 75 percent of the time, which gives an idea of how to approach the dogs and roughly where the birds may go. But the time you decide positively and absolutely, the quail do something unexpected; you're surprised, you balk and lose a second or two. So hang loose and tell yourself, "I'm going to take those birds no matter what they do." When they flush, react to the situation as it develops.

Getting as close as possible to the birds when they flush saves you time. Carrying the gun properly and mounting it smoothly also saves time, as does looking at the horizon and not down at the ground. By increasing time in these ways, by gaining confidence, you won't panic when a quail goes up. You have time!

When you can put one quail in your game bag for every three shots fired, you're probably a little better than the average hunter. When you bag one quail per two shells for a season's average, you're about to become an expert. If you can consistently kill ten quail with fifteen shots, you're a real hot-shot. If you say time after time that you can bag ten birds with twelve shots, you're probably a liar.

I've had the privilege of hunting with hotshots

who ran ten to twelve straight. It was a day for them to remember, and I was happy for them. If I ran into them five years later, they could recall in detail just how they killed each of the twelve straight birds. They had conveniently forgotten the hunt the week before when they went through a box of shells to bag ten.

While all of us like to shoot well and collect bragging stories, the percentage of birds killed per shell fired should not be the main criteria of a successful hunt. The intangible values are many. If you don't recognize them after a few quail hunts, you should quit hunting and take up skeet, where the percentage of hits is paramount. Besides, skeet is cheaper than quail hunting.

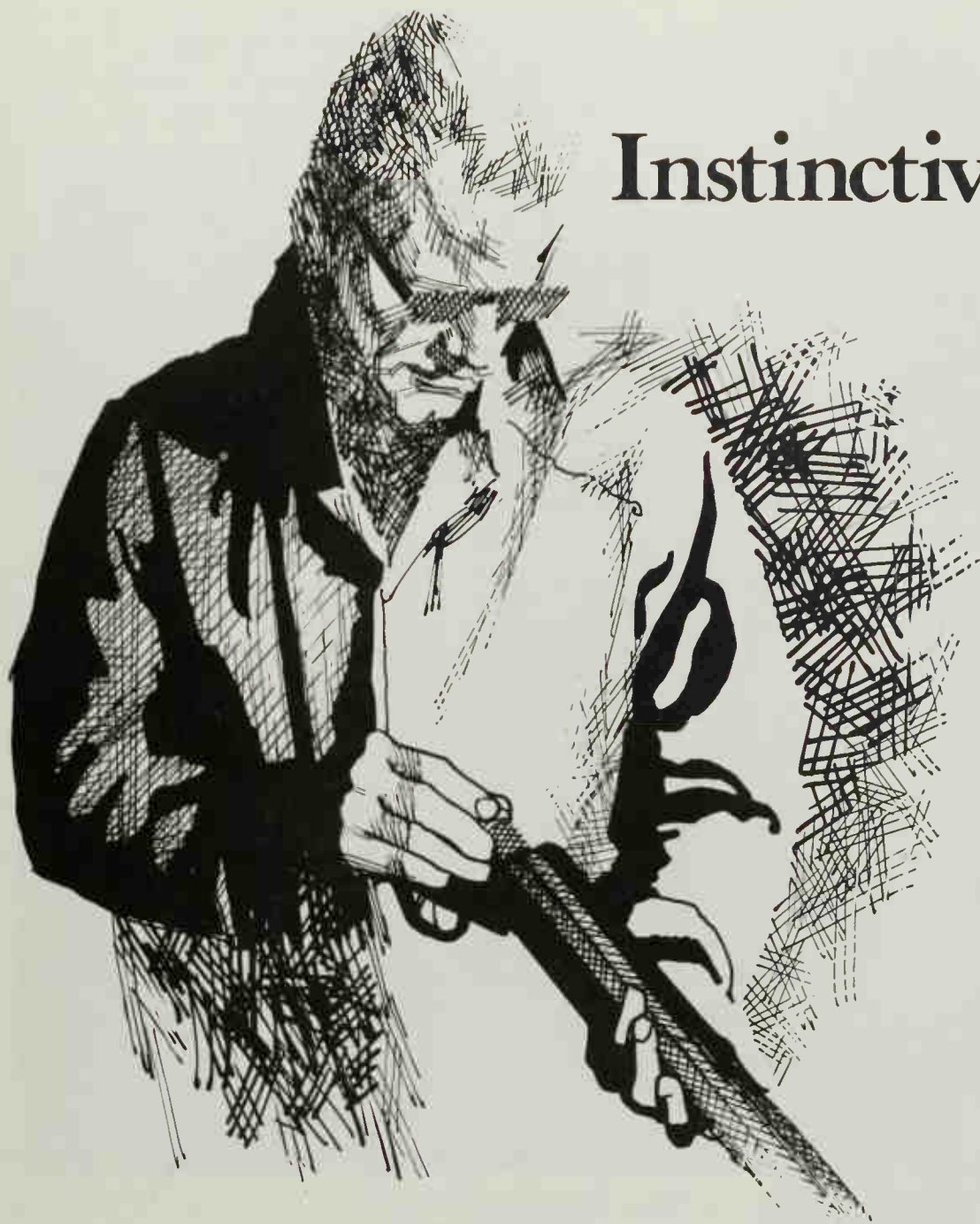
If the average pair of hunters can put up ten coveys of quail in a day, they should be happy. If we figure the average covey has fifteen birds, that means you put up 150 birds on covey flushes. From the ones left over, the singles, you should put up another fifty. That doesn't mean you'll have shots at all of them, but during the day you'll have up about 200 birds. That's a lot of action. Some zones in South Carolina allow a daily limit of fifteen birds, the highest in the nation. Other states may allow eight or ten. Anyone likes to bag a limit, but whether you do or not, you should have a good time if you find eight or ten coveys in a day's hunt.

Many hunters will not shoot a covey when there are only five or six birds left in it. Most hunters will not shoot a covey out through the last bird. There is no biological reason for this on any extended acreage of quail habitat. However, as a matter of public relations where hunters are using other people's land, it's a good idea not to shoot a covey out if the owner is liable to be upset.

During late fall and winter as hunters and the weather take their toll, small coveys join with other coveys. Some coveys are never located by hunters and others are rarely shot. In the following spring, the birds spread to good nesting cover, and the habitat is replenished during summer and early fall. In good quail country, shooting a few coveys out has no bearing on the quail population the following fall.

As long as bobwhites are given good habitat, hunters can safely take 40 to 50 percent of the birds without affecting the population for the next hunting season. In fact, I suspect this percentage is well on the conservative side. If quail are given their habitat needs, they'll survive hunters, predators, disease, and weather.

Instinctive Shooting



Most of the top quail shooters cannot explain to another hunter just what they do with their shotguns to hit a quail. They are instinctive shooters, but they probably don't know it. They'll be better off if they don't sit down with a slide rule and try to analyze their movements and reactions when a quail flushes.

Without being mysterious or using too many big words, let me try to explain instinctive shooting. There are three general types of shooting. A snap shooter points his muzzle ahead of a bird, shoots, and hopes the bird runs into the shot. A conscious shooter shoots with his brain in control of his body actions. He has time to consciously think each step through, such as sighting a scoped rifle at a stand-

ing deer. An instinctive shooter lets his subconscious handle all of the computations and bodily actions.

Whichever method you use, stick with it alone. You get into problems when you mix the methods, yet it's easy to do.

Each human has a conscious and a subconscious control. Psychiatrists haven't figured everything out, but you don't need to be one to understand some practical workings. When you drive a car along a highway and consciously see a red light, your brain tells you to stop and your foot hits the brake pedal. The brain can only think one thought at a time, although it can flit from thought to thought in an instant.



Harry Hampton, secretary-treasurer of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, on the left, moves in with the author to flush a single. No matter from where the bird flushes, both hunters will be close to it when it comes up. If the bird flies five degrees or so on Hampton's side and he misses, it will be okay for the author to shoot. Having hunted together many times, they do not mind one another reaching across the line a little as long as safety is assured. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)

Now, have you ever been driving down the highway and suddenly snapped to, but you cannot remember driving the past five miles? Frightening, is it not? Why didn't you run off the road or into another car? Because your subconscious was taking care of things, making all the mathematical computations and controlling your bodily movements.

If the brain can only think one thought at a time, how can a piano player move ten fingers on the keys, one foot on the pedal, and sing all at the same time? To explain it simply, the subconscious is like a computer. Practice, or repetition, imprints a message on the subconscious and a given situation triggers recall. When the subconscious is working

smoothly, the pianist plays well; when the subconscious is out of whack, the music may be a little rough. But if the pianist tried to play by consciously thinking each passage through, he couldn't get it all together quickly enough.

Let's say you are out in the field working your bird dog without a gun. Old Rover goes on point and you walk past him and flush the covey. You pick out one quail, focus on it, concentrate on it, and follow it with your eyes. You don't have any trouble doing that, do you? You follow the singles and when Rover points, you flush the bird. You stretch your arm out and point your forefinger at the quail and follow it everywhere it curves and zigzags. No

problem. Nothing to it.

Do you remember in the chapter on equipment I told you the shotgun was an extension of the eye? Well, if you can hold your forefinger on a curving quail, why can't you do the same with the muzzle of your shotgun? But there's a catch, if you recall. The gun has to fit you reasonably well. It has to fit comfortably so you can mount it the same way each time for it to be an extension of your eye. The comb or top of the stock must come up to the same place under your cheekbone each time; the butt or end of the stock must rest firmly in the same V of your shoulder. That's the only way you can imprint your subconscious for accurate shooting. If the gun is mounted a different way each time, there's no way the subconscious controls can know this. It's like changing the touch on a piano just before the maestro sits down to play. He needs practice to adjust.

You shoot with both eyes open because you see better and have peripheral vision. Even as the full force of your eyes and will are concentrated on the bird you are about to shoot, your subconscious is keeping track of other birds so that you will be able to instantly swing to a second quail.

Nearly all humans have one eye which dominates the vision called the master eye. The right eye is usually the right-handed person's master eye. If your master eye is your right eye, then you should shoot right-handed.

Surprisingly, many hunters do not know which is their master eye. Forget about the subconscious for a minute and take this simple test. Pick out a small object, such as a light switch, 10 or 15 feet away. With both eyes open, extend your dominant arm and point your forefinger at the switch as though you were shooting a pistol. With both eyes open, your finger will be pointing at the switch. Keep the right eye open and close the left eye. If your right eye is your master eye, your finger will still be pointing at the switch.

Open both eyes and again point your finger at the switch. Now keep the left eye open and close the right eye. If your finger jumps, or is no longer pointing at the switch, this confirms that your right eye is the dominant one. If your left eye is the master eye, your finger will jump when you close your left eye.

I didn't know of this easy test as a youngster and shot left-handed until I was in my twenties. Then I found out and switched to the right hand. It wasn't hard to do but gives me a handy excuse on

bad days when I'm missing a lot—if I can get my partner to listen.

If you are new to wing shooting, a great help would be to practice mounting your *unloaded* shotgun at home. First, look down the barrel and line up the sight on a small object such as a light switch. If your shotgun has a rib with a middle and front sight, align them to make sure the gun is not canted.

Practice mounting the gun in the same place each time. Your cheekbone and shoulder are the guides. Now lower the stock to armpit level and relax. Focus your eyes on the light switch. Glare at the switch and concentrate your will on it. Keep looking at the switch and quickly mount your gun. The muzzle should be pointed at it. The muzzle is an extension of your eyes.



Rest for a couple of minutes. When you are not used to it, seven pounds of shotgun gets heavy. You will discover that when you get overly tired, your subconscious does not work smoothly. This time, pick up the shotgun and hold the butt of the stock at hip level. Focus your eyes on another small object across the room and quickly mount the gun. The muzzle should be pointed at the object. You



The author is in perfect position to continue walking ahead to flush quail. His position is relaxed, but the gun stock needs only to be moved a few inches to his cheek when he *hears*, not sees, a bird start up. The muzzle is just above the horizon, in a safe position. When the stock goes up, the muzzle goes down and should be pointing at the horizon where his eyes will pick up the birds. There's just one thing wrong! He has lowered his eyes to admire the pretty white setter belonging to Papa Jack Lauder of Tallahassee. Admiration of pointing dogs should be done as hunter comes from behind. Once up to the dog, his eyes should be on the horizon. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)



As the quail flushes, the author's ears set off the alarm. The gun starts up, stock goes up, muzzle comes down and the forefinger pushes the safety off. The author's eyes are at horizon level. Foot position is good, weight on both feet and body slightly forward. He should have time to get off three shots. Saving fractions of seconds by correct approach past dog, proper gun handling, good body position and erect head position means the hunter has time to get off three shots. After the shooting is over, the author will not remember clicking the safety off or mounting the gun or swinging it. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)



With gun tightly cheeked, the author instinctively moves the shotgun as an extension of his eyes. The gun swings to his left as his finger moves from the safety to the trigger. He is not consciously aware of the muzzle tip, but when it starts to pass the quail, he will pull the trigger, instinctively. Because of good foot position and balance, there is no strain on any muscles. The subconscious is free to operate all controls. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)



The author dropped the first quail, instantly picked up a second swinging in the same direction, and when the muzzle passes it, he will fire again. The momentum of the subconscious swing will take care of lead. Note that the foot position has not changed from the preceding picture. There's no time for fox-trotting. The upper body swivels on the hips. A hunter in good physical condition should be able to swivel on his hips and fire anywhere in an 180-degree swing, comfortably and without moving his feet. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)



The author demonstrates footwork when on a tight-holding single, or close to a covey. To do the bobwhite shuffle, the left leg, with knee straight, goes out and down. If the bird goes up, the shooter has only to move weight forward. If the bird holds, the right foot is quickly brought up with the left foot, and the left goes out again. It's a sidewise approach that keeps the hunter close to the ideal shooting position at all times. No matter when the birds flush, the hunter needs only to do a minimum of moving to be in correct shooting position. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)



While it's best not to run in the field with a loaded shotgun, sometimes you must. It can be done safely, as the author demonstrates. He has the shotgun held securely with both hands. If he accidentally flushes a bird, he can quickly get the gun mounted. If he trips and starts to fall, he can shove the muzzle away from himself or anyone ahead of him. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)

are imprinting your subconscious controls.

Now let's try another exercise right in your home. Let's get that tape coded. But do me a favor so I don't get a lot of letters from members of the National Rifle Association. Be safe. Make sure there are no shells in the chamber or magazine. Lock your shells in a drawer in another room. In getting ready to dry fire, check your gun to be sure it is unloaded. Be certain that the gun safety is on and will not fire. Put your forefinger on the safety if you are using a pump or semiautomatic, or use your thumb if you are handling a double. Bring the stock butt to your armpit. This time, focus eyes on the target, when you mount the gun push the safety to off, move your finger to the trigger, and as quickly as the gun gets fully mounted, pull the trigger. Don't shilly-shally when the gun comes up to full mount. If you do, you will start aiming

rather than pointing. You point a shotgun but aim a rifle. Aim implies corrections and conscious thought. With your eyes on the target, mount the gun and quickly pull the trigger.

When pointing a shotgun, your eyes must be focused on the target. You are vaguely aware of the muzzle when you first start practicing. When you kill a quail, you are never conscious of the barrel. You couldn't be. If your eyes are focused on the muzzle, you wouldn't kill the bird. But you remember seeing the bird fold because that's where your eyes are focused and the full force of your will is concentrated.

Now repeat the exercise starting with the stock on the hip. Later in the field, you will mount the gun by the sound of a quail. If you walk in past pointing dogs, the stock butt will be at armpit level because you will be expecting a bird; if an un-

expected bird flushes, your stock will probably be at hip level. If you code your tape correctly with practice, you will never be able to consciously remember moving the safety to "off" when you shoot at a bird.

Nothing is wrong with coding in the sound. With your eyes focused on the target, shout "Whirr!" and mount your gun. Don't worry about your wife thinking you've slipped another cog.

Your next practice should be a stroll in the woods with your shotgun, without shells. Pick out a small stationary object at a distance of 20 yards. Go through your dry firing exercises. Then turn your gaze away. Shout "Whirr!" Move your eyes to focus on your target and at the same time start mounting your gun, push the safety off, and when the gun is mounted pull the trigger. If your eyes are focused on the target and you mount the gun in your familiar spot and quickly pull the trigger, you have to "hit" the target. You have just killed your first toadstool.

But, you say, a quail is moving! It doesn't make any difference. You have already admitted that you can follow a moving quail with your eyes. If the muzzle of a shotgun is simply an extension of your eyes, then why can't you follow the quail with the muzzle, or move slightly ahead of the bird?

You can! Your subconscious will handle all of the operations if you have imprinted it with practice and will stay cool and let it run. The worst thing you can do is try to *think* the steps through. If the bird curves off to the left and if you let your conscious mind take over and say: the bird is going to the left and now your muzzle is on the bird and now it is time to pull the trigger, you will stop the gun, and take time to react, and your shot will arrive where the bird used to be.

Few quail ever flush away in a straight line. There's nearly always an angle, no matter how slight. With most flying quail, the angle is definite.

When a quail rises from the ground, your eyes take an instant to focus on the bird, to catch up with it as it angles away. During this instant, you are clicking off the safety and checking the gun. You catch up with the quail and as your muzzle passes the bird's head, you pull the trigger. The momentum of the swing, begun in order to catch up with the bird, causes a follow-through as you pull the trigger. The bird drops!

New shooters always want to know how much to lead a flying bird. Forget it! You can't consciously figure, memorize, and use leads for angles of

degrees of 5, 10, 15, 20, etc. through 90. Let your subconscious make the trigonometric calculations—you catch up with the bird, and as you swing past its head, pull the trigger.

Now the trick to get the momentum of gun swing is to start behind the quail, which happens automatically when coveys or singles flush away from you. But suppose your buddy bumps a bird and it swings across ahead of you at a full 90-degree deflection shot? You deliberately pick up the bird from behind, swing past it, and as you pass its head, pull the trigger.

One of the toughest of all shots for a new hunter, but an easy shot for an old-timer or an expert skeeter, is a bird flushed well ahead that flies straight at you, a little higher than your head. What do you do? Start your muzzle from behind the bird, catch up with it, keep swinging, and as the bird is blacked out from your vision, pull the trigger. The momentum of your swing takes care of the lead.

You can recharge your subconscious with new data for its computer. If you are consistently missing birds that swing out at angles greater than 45 degrees, and you are sure that you are cheeking your gun properly, then you most likely are shooting behind the quail. You could be stopping the gun when you pull the trigger to watch the bird fall.

Of course the bird won't fall if you stop the gun just as you pull the trigger. Tell your subconscious not to pull the trigger until you are several inches ahead of the wide-angle quail. Remember, you are shooting a pattern, not a single bullet. When you connect with the next quail, your subconscious will record the data to use again.

The subconscious can handle negative information. If you pull the trigger before your muzzle catches up with the bird, you miss. You know why. You will and command your subconscious not to do that anymore.

Any experienced quail hunter knows whether the bird will drop or get away when he pulls the trigger. He was right or he was wrong, but he made his move.

When a quail flushes, you cannot balk or pause. Make your move and shoot. In one smooth effort, commit yourself and pull the trigger. You have to commit yourself or you run out of time. If you miss, catch up with the quail again and as you pass it, fire the second shot.

Why does a great pianist who has practiced eight hours a day for twenty years give a poor perform-



Under most circumstances in a covey flush, the hunter on the left shoots those that fly to the left of the dog; the hunter on the right takes those which fly to the right of the dog. By both hunters coming up from behind and close to the pointing dog, they will be near the flushing birds, giving them more time to shoot before the birds fly out of range. Time and distance are the same when hunting quail. (Photo credit: Steve Theg.)

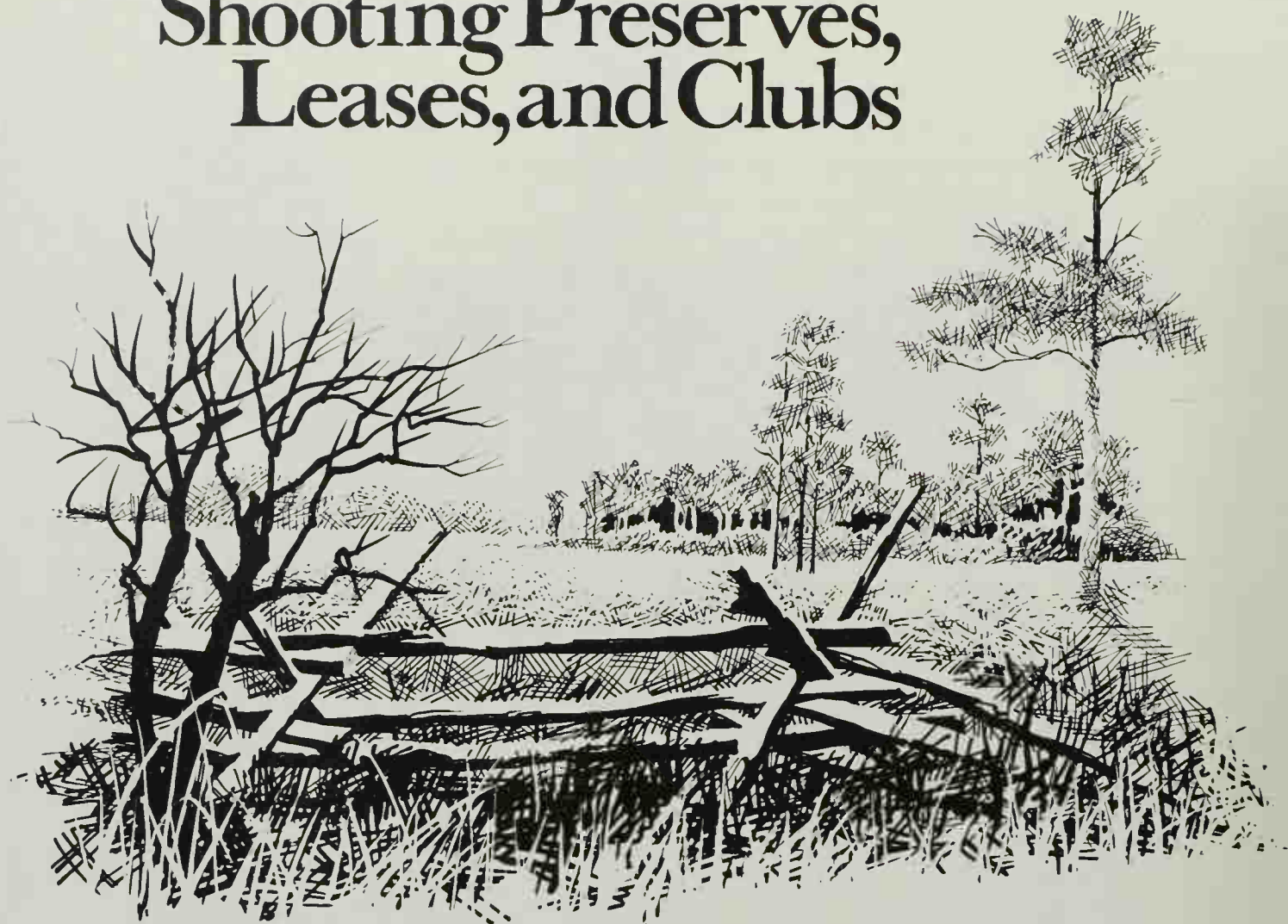
ance? His subconscious is a little off. The next night the subconscious is "right" and everything flows as smoothly as spring water, and he brings the house down. It's the same with quail shooting. The more practice, with fine adjustments on the tape, the fewer bad days there will be.

The subconscious works best when a person is

confident. Confidence comes from past success. Success comes from practice with a positive attitude. You gotta believe!

When you approach the dogs on point to flush a covey of bobwhite quail, give your subconscious a fiery pep talk. Then stride in, kick those quail up, and shoot the positive hell out of them!

Shooting Preserves, Leases, and Clubs



At least one shooting preserve is within easy driving distance of nearly every major population center in America. Some of the preserves require annual membership, but many are open to the public for a half or full day of shooting. The preserve operators charge by either the number of birds released or by the number killed.

Shooting preserves are convenient places to hunt. The operators provide the land, which is developed in a variety of cover, and stock game birds daily. They provide dogs, guides, field transportation, usually clay-target shooting, a clubhouse, and they clean and package your game. You give them money in return.

Ring-necked pheasants are the most popular shooting preserve bird because they do not become tame when reared in captivity. Bobwhite quail and chukar partridge easily become tame, and special techniques must be followed to rear them so that once stocked in the shooting fields they revert to the wild and give a good field performance.

Many shooting preserves in the South specialize in bobwhite quail and are continually developing techniques to provide hunting as similar to the hunting of native quail as is humanly possible. If your dogs are well trained, the operators are glad for you to hunt them. Some preserves have special fields for dog training. You buy a few birds, stock them as singles, and work your dogs on them.

If you are interested in trying a shooting preserve, write to two or three for their free brochures. Prices and services vary a great deal. The average cost per quail is from \$3.00 to \$5.00. Some preserves have artificial hunting, and others do their best to provide hunting which approaches that of native quail. Before you decide whether or not you like preserve hunting, try two or three.

The North American Game Breeders and Shooting Preserve Association, Inc., publishes a national directory of preserves open to the public each fall. It is free by writing John Mullin, Arrowhead, R.F.D. 1, Box 28, Goose Lake, Iowa 52750. Most

state game commissions will furnish you with a list of preserves open to the public in their state.

If you wish to hunt stocked birds, the commercial shooting preserve offers the cheapest way with the fewest headaches. However, small groups of sportsmen do form clubs, lease land, buy their birds from a game breeder, and have their own operation. If they qualify for a preserve license, they are entitled to a season of five or six months or longer with no daily bag limit.

Most private clubs quickly find that there is so much work to do that they must employ a part-time or full-time manager. This runs up the cost, but saves arguments among the members.

In many cases, a new group is better off to go to a commercial operator and make a deal with him. He may have enough land to set aside separate acreage and run the club within his overall operation. He is a professional and knows how to handle the problems of rearing birds, planting feed and cover, stocking birds, keeping dogs, and managing hunts.

Some hunters who lease land for native quail buy pen-reared quail from game breeders and, to sweeten the pot, stock them during the hunting season. A small percentage of the stocked birds will join up with native coveys *if* they survive in the wilds three or four weeks. Almost none of the pen-reared birds will survive to reproduce in the spring.

You cannot stockpile wildlife. A given amount of food, cover, and other habitat factors will support only so many birds. Even the most perfectly developed habitat in the world will hold only a limited number of birds on a year-round basis. The bird itself is a limiting factor. It will not be crowded beyond a certain point.

Please believe what old Charley is about to say so you won't waste your hard-earned money. Stocking pen-reared quail is a total waste of effort and money if your basic aim is to increase the wild population of birds. Improving the habitat increases the native bird population. If you improve the habitat, the native quail will handle the multiplication.

If you decide to stock quail for put-and-take shooting, make sure the birds are from a good strain, healthy, fully feathered, about sixteen weeks of age or older, and that they have been reared in isolation and weather-conditioned in flight pens. Stock them early in the morning and shoot them the same day, for a reasonable return on your investment.

The members of new clubs often insist that quail be stocked on Friday for a Saturday shoot. Do they think leaving the quail out for one night will make them wilder? It won't! A quail that has been released for two or three days may give a poor field performance because it is starving to death. It has not adapted to foraging for itself. All it really wants is to find its pen where there is safety, plenty of food and water, and social brethren.

To put quail out three or four weeks before the season opens is a waste of money. They wander off the property, become cafeterias for predators, and die of exposure and starvation.

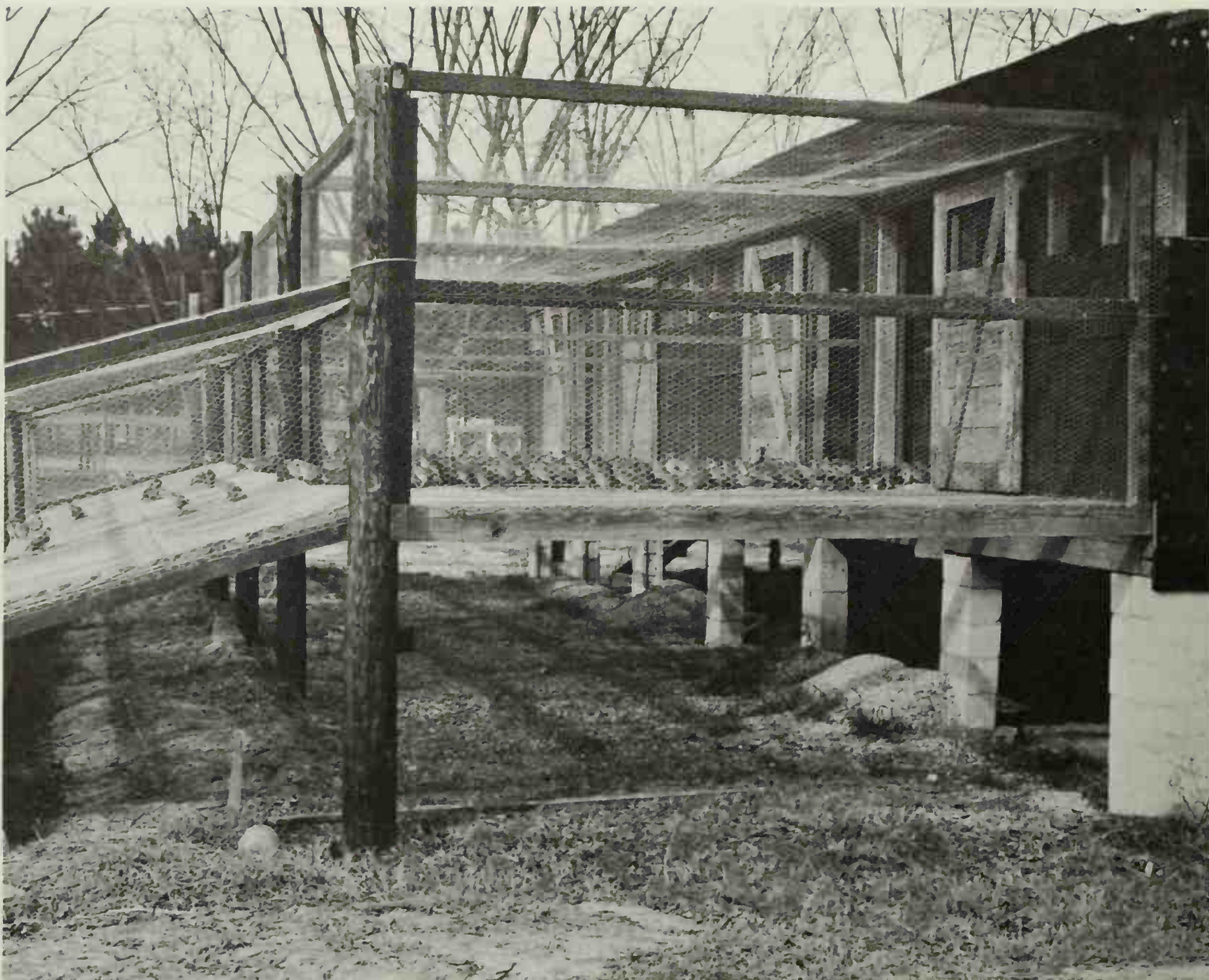
The only economically sensible way is to stock them the morning you plan to shoot. So that there is an element of surprise and the quail truly have to be hunted, one or two persons should do the stocking without telling the hunters where the birds were released. They should be stocked in coveys of five to seven birds, not twelve or fifteen, so that you can more easily keep track of them and more efficiently harvest them. Even so, you will be lucky to bag 70 percent. The 30 percent that you lose is what runs up the cost per quail. If you stock four weeks before you shoot, you will do well to find 30 or 40 percent.

Putting a pen-reared bird down in a field does not make it wild. If it was tamed in the first sixteen weeks of its life, and especially the first five, it rarely becomes wild in the woods. It seldom lives that long. A tame quail is not afraid of you or your dogs. It will give a miserable imitation of a native quail. If you plan to stock birds, write to John Mullin for the names of reputable quail breeders in your state or region. If you plan to stock large numbers of birds, ask Mullin for the names and addresses of approved consultants in your region. Paying a consultant for two or three days' work can be the best money you'll spend.

Many hunters lease land for their exclusive use during the hunting season. There are no standard rates for lease fees; you'll have to pay roughly what the going rate is in your area. This can be from \$.25 to \$1 an acre.

Quail land that averages one bird per acre year after year is tops. There are a few exceptions where intensive management and thousands of dollars have brought the quail population to two birds per acre during the shooting season. But you will not be able to lease it because the owner developed it for himself and friends.

With no doubts at all, the best leasing arrange-



Rearing bobwhite quail which will give a good performance when stocked in the field means starting with a good strain, rearing the birds in isolation, adapting them to weather, and conditioning them to flight. Generally, the hunter who wishes to stock quail is better off to buy them from a reliable game breeder than to try to raise them himself.

ment is for two hunters—you and your buddy—to lease what acreage they can afford and reasonably hunt. Matters get complicated when more than two hunters are involved.

If you are fortunate enough to find 1,000 acres with a population of 1,000 quail, you'll have to pay \$1.00 an acre. If you and your buddy harvest 40 percent, that means 400 birds, or \$2.50 leasing fee per bird shot.

Actually, if you find land with one quail per acre you're going to have to stand in line to bid against other hunters. If you live in a metropolitan area, you'll do well to find land that has three or four coveys per 100 acres and that you can drive to and from in a day. Even if you pay \$.50 an acre, the cost per quail bagged is going to be high. On 1,000 acres, it figures out about \$2.50 per bird taken home.

To lower your cost per recreation day, one solution is to lease hunting and fishing rights year-round. Most farms today have a pond that offers fishing and sometimes, duck shooting. There's a good chance of having several dove shoots. If you and the farmer really hit it off, the farm can provide many days of outdoor recreation, nature studies, and picnics for your family. Although you may not be able to justify the lease price for quail hunting, you might well afford it for the other benefits.

Sometimes farmers will lease rights if sportsmen pay the farm taxes. Often a farmer is more concerned that you agree to put up posted signs and help with weekend patrolling against trespassing than about the amount of cash he will get from a lease. The fact that he has his land leased gives him



Even when shotguns are unloaded, they should be removed carefully from vehicles. The design on this rig allows hunters in the back seat to move to the cab in case of rain.

a handy excuse for turning down other hunters.

Nothing is inexpensive about quail hunting! If you want cheap outdoor recreation, join the country club and play golf. The Internal Revenue Service allows \$.12 a mile for business driving. Hunters conveniently forget the cost of driving hundreds of miles. Because of the mileage factor, to lease land 100 miles from home rather than 50 may cost more even though the lease is cheaper at the further distance.



Over 95 percent of the quail production in the United States is accidental. The quail make it on what food, cover, and other habitat factors are accidentally left over from farming, lumbering, and other land usage. State wildlife agencies increase quail production a negligible amount. If it takes fifteen acres of top habitat to house one covey of quail, how much can a state agency do with a hunter's license fee of \$5 or \$10? Farm land costs \$200 to \$1,000 an acre. If you put the \$1,000 out at interest, it would earn \$60 a year. Yet that kind of investment will produce one bobwhite quail.

Now, this is an exaggerated situation, and I know about multiple use. But I want you to understand that increasing quail production costs plenty. It is expensive for a farmer and for a state wildlife

agency. Only wealthy landowners who say "hang the cost" can get into intense quail management. In pure dollars and cents, increasing bobwhite quail production above what the land produces is seldom justifiable.

I hasten to add that, like most quail hunters, I never sit down and figure out what it costs me to hunt. It would only make me feel bad, and I don't really want to know. If my mortal soul had economic value, I would not hesitate to hock it for just one more quail hunt.

Suppose four typical hunters lease 1,000 acres that have an average of three coveys per 100 acres. The instant the agreement is signed, two of them will want to start a program of predator control. They can't stand the thought of some varmint eating a quail they want to kill. Please believe me, to shoot some poor old fox that is living off rats and mice is a waste of time and energy. Hunters may think they're heroes when they shoot stray house cats, with the idea they're protecting quail, but I know them for something else. Besides being unprintables, they're bush, real amateurs.

I'm not opposed to hunting predators for sport, but I hate to see hunters kidding themselves. The way to protect quail from predators is to provide cover for the birds. Predator control by killing is not economically feasible for native quail. Of course the situation may be different under the artificial conditions of a shooting preserve with limited acreage, where several hundred pen-reared birds are put out each week by daily stockings. They provide free buffet and great numbers of predators may be attracted.

Predators are a desirable part of our wildlife heritage and seeing a bobcat, fox, or coyote always adds to the spice of any hunt. I was about to say skunk, but then I remembered the time a Brittany got sprayed just before a long ride home, and it was too cold to keep the windows down. Incidentally, the best remedy for removing skunk scent is tomato juice and lemon.

The other lessees will dream up elaborate plans for planting feed and cover. They don't really know if feed and cover are limiting factors on their acreage, but they've heard that feed and cover will solve everything. They could be wrong! In many places in the South, there's too much cover. Rather than planting more, the existing cover needs disking, cutting, or burning. On the other hand, feed on the farm could be plentiful and nesting cover lacking.

Before spending money to increase quail production, call in an expert. Let's say your land has an average of four coveys per 100 acres. Increasing the number of coveys to five per 100 acres can easily cost several hundred dollars. If you don't know what you're doing, you may not get that fifth covey, or you could lower it to three.

You need help. Free help is available. Contact the state game department, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, the agricultural extension service, or the county agent. From one or more of these sources, you can get an expert to go over your land, estimate the situation, and make recommendations with rough costs.

Where you are leasing land, you have to come up with dollars and cents from an expert. Before a farmer changes land use, he's got to see a greater income.

Under most situations of leasing, you are going to be better off taking the accidental quail population and being happy with it rather than spending money to increase production. I know this goes against the grain of what so many state and federal agencies preach, but they aren't spending their own money. I'd like to see the quail population quadrupled by next hunting season. So would you, but it'll pay you to do some hard pencil work before you try to increase it one covey.

Under many lease situations, you are better off taking steps to make existing coveys more accessible than trying to increase their number. For instance, there may be a covey that lives mostly on the edge of a huge thicket. The birds run into it as you approach, and you seldom get a shot open enough to kill a bird. By using a field feeder, maybe you can lure the birds out from the dense cover.

Perhaps the adjoining property is not hunted. If you believe that winter feed is short on that property, try to entice the birds onto your land with field feeders. Under this condition, a couple of field feeders are cheaper than planting feed strips.

Where winter feed is a limiting factor, or under other special conditions, you may wish to use field feeders. A free catalog is available by writing Scruggs Quail Feeders, P.O. Box 18201, Tampa, Florida 33609.

Suppose you are seldom able to follow up singles on your leased land because they go in swamps or dense cover. Perhaps, if the landowner approves, some judicious burning or clearing with a brush-hog will make the birds accessible.



This hunting rig has everything. On the open road, it can cruise comfortably at 55 miles an hour. Upon arrival at the hunting area, the dogs are put down and the hunters sit on the cowcatcher which has dual driving controls and safe gun racks. The hunters ride high and have good visibility to watch the dogs working.

If you can't get much shooting at existing coveys because of thick cover, why pay to increase the number of coveys?

Most quail biologists are more oriented toward increasing quail production than managing existing coveys for harvesting. You need their help when considering a management program, but the dollars they're talking about spending are your own.

It's cheaper to lease another 100 acres of land than to develop habitat for one new covey of quail.



Field Care and Dressing Quail

According to poultry experts, the proper way to prepare quail for the table is as follows. Immediately after shooting, cut the head off and hang the body for two minutes, with neck down, and let the blood drain. Heat water to 149°; dunk the bird, and then defeather and eviscerate. Next, put it in an ice box and chill; bring the temperature down to 38°, but do not freeze.

For some reason, I have never found this practical in the field. While hunting, I generally forget about the birds until I get back to town. Then I try to give them to my hunting buddy or a neighbor.

Actually, my family and I enjoy dining on quail. If our supply is low, I bring birds home and try to talk my wife into dressing them. I have never been successful. However, she is quite expert at removing shot. With her slender fingers she has a natural talent for extracting shot and loosening things along the backbone to remove lungs and other clinging parts.

If I walk all day, I have to carry the birds in my game bag, and they do not cool properly. There is no other choice. If I am hunting from a vehicle,

I make a reasonable effort to store the birds in the vehicle where they will be shaded, aerated, and out of reach of the dogs. My dogs will not eat quail, but my friends' dogs might. I have frequently seen a lank pointer swallow a quail in one gulp, making no effort to taste or savor it. Once we left my buddy's German shorthair in the car with seven quail on the floorboard. When we returned, he had eaten all of them—whole, so cleanly we could hardly find a feather. Under situations like this, it is not sinful to cuss.

A good idea is to build a small storage box out of hardware cloth with a solid top—if you have a handy place for the box in your vehicle so people don't trip over it. The hardware cloth allows the birds to cool and air to pass in and out, and the top provides shade. The birds are also protected from your buddy's dog.

No matter how hot it is, I do not remove the insides or do anything with the quail until I get home to my kitchen where there is running water. If I am dead tired, I may put the birds in the pantry and clean them the next morning. They will

not spoil! Some people think they will, but they won't, no matter how shot up a bird might be. I grant you there will be an odor, but there will also be an odor if you gut one thirty seconds after it has been shot.

I have deliberately hung quail in 50° temperature, with no evisceration, for three days and the meat did not spoil. The British hang grouse and pheasant whole for three or four days, and so do some Dutchmen in Pennsylvania. They do it to flavor the game. As far as I can tell, hanging quail doesn't change the taste.

Some old-time hunters insist on removing the insides of a quail in the field to prevent spoilage. All this does is speed up the process! Opening the body cavity allows bacteria to enter and immediately start working in the dark recesses.

Freshly shot quail should not be put in plastic bags. This prevents the body heat from dissipating.

Some hunters like to dress their quail before leaving the field and store them in ice chests. They bury the feathers and insides so as not to litter. I don't like field dressing simply because there is no running water and there is nothing as sticky and messy on the hands as bloody feathers.

Wherever you dress your quail, you only need two tools: a sharp-pointed knife for scraping along the inside of the backbone and digging out shot, and a pair of straight-edged game shears. For about \$15.00, you can buy them made of stainless steel, which does not rust. If you do not wish to invest this much, for \$5 or less you can buy a plain pair of wire cutters with straight edges. They will rust if they're not cleaned and oiled. The cutting edges should be at least one inch long. The edges on my game shears are two inches long, and I can use them on larger game.

The shears are used for snipping off wings, legs, and necks, and for cutting a breast in half. The shears are ten times faster than using a knife, and you don't cut off as many fingers.

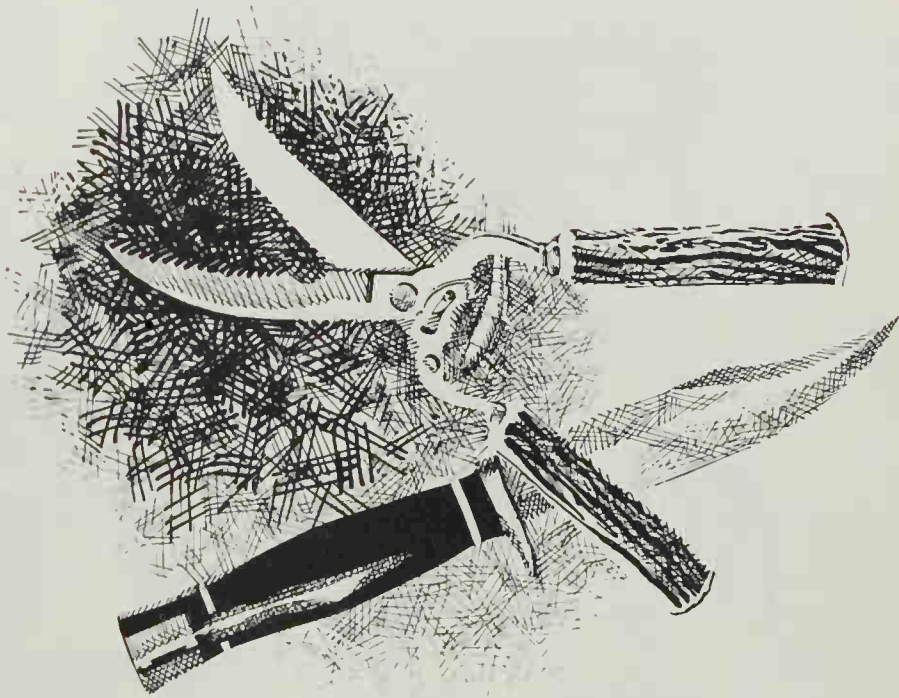
I have never been able to clean quail in the kitchen without feathers blowing around. I do not know of any preventive.

Let's say you have ten quail in your kitchen sink. You are now faced with a decision. Shall you pick the birds or shall you skin them? Whenever I have to prepare birds, I skin them because it's easier and quicker. But I am happy if someone else will pick the birds.

Gourmets prefer picked birds. They say the birds not only look better, but they taste better

cooked with the skin and fat left on. Maybe they do taste better, but the difference is not enough to make me pick birds.

Before dressing the birds, one other thing you may wish to do is age your birds. Juveniles, birds born in the last breeding season, are more tender

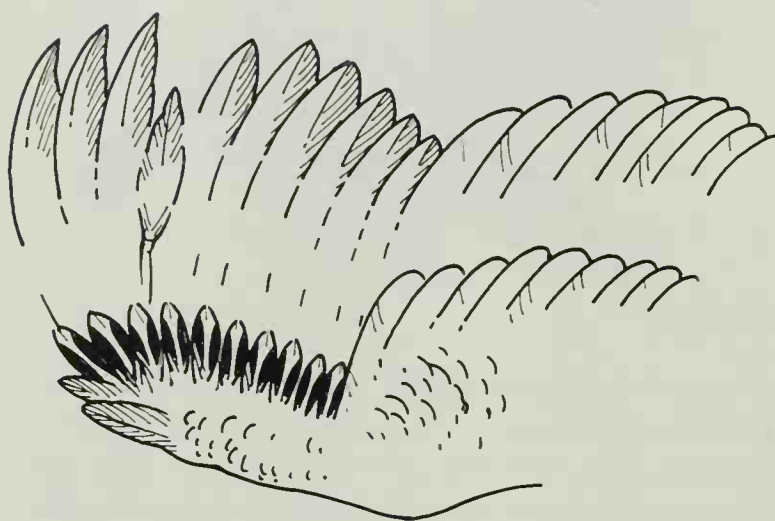
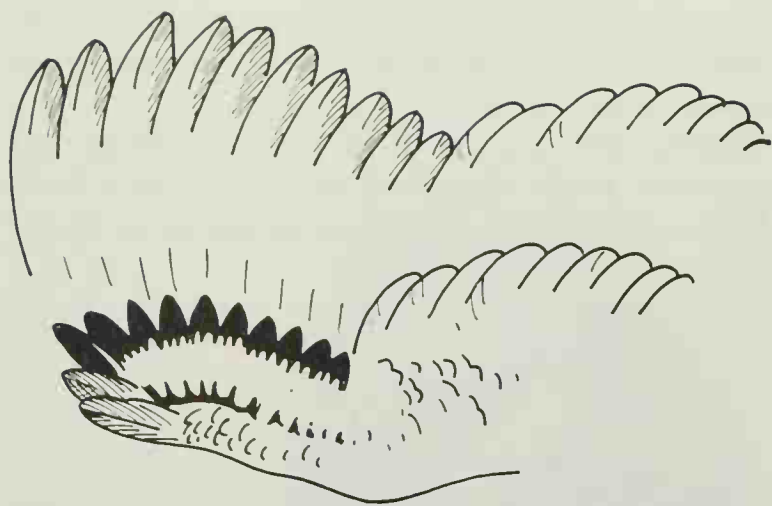


than adults, birds which have bred. The young birds are ideal for frying and older birds are better suited for cooking with steam and juices. You may wish to age the birds and separate them for cooking or freezing.

With a little practice, you can quickly determine a bird's age by checking the top sides of its wings against the following diagram. For a season's average, you will find that about four out of five quail are juveniles if your area had a normal breeding season. This method of using quail feathers to age birds was developed by wildlife biologists for aiding their field research.

If you pick your birds, heat a six-gallon bucket of water to 150°. Do not use boiling water; you want to pick the birds, not cook them. Add a teaspoon of detergent powder and stir. Grab two or three quail by the feet and dunk them; move the birds up and down, sloshing the water between the feathers to the skin. Move them to a spread newspaper and rub the feathers off; you don't have to pick them one by one. If a few feathers are reluctant, dunk the birds again.

After the feathers are off, take your shears and snip off the wing tips, the legs at the knee joints, and the neck about 1/2 inch from the breast. Put the bird on its back and snip a shallow incision



The wing of the juvenile bird has light tipped coverts and pointed primaries, while the wing of the adult has more rounded primaries and uniform gray coverts.

*Courtesy Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

through the skin from the rectum to the keel bone. Pull out the insides. You may wish to save the liver and gizzard for giblets, but they are slim pickings. Cut halfway through the gizzard, empty and wash. Pull the crop out from the front of the breast. You may want to open the crop to see what the bird ate that day. Wash the inside of the bird with cool water and remove stray stringy things. Take the knife and work out shot, making as small an opening as you can in the skin.

If you skin your birds, take your shears and snip off the wings at the shoulder joints (the wing meat is lost this way but it's no great loss), the legs at the knee joints, and the neck close to the breast. Put the quail on its back. With your fingers, pinch through the skin between the rectum and the keel bone. Do not dig into the body cavity at this stage.

Insert your forefinger underneath the skin and work towards the back and front, on either side of the bird.

You will quickly have a front half of skin and a back half. Peel the front end towards the neck, as though you were pulling off a dress. Then peel the back part the same way. You now have a skinned bird. There may be a few feathers left at the knee joints; pull them out or use your shears and cut that length off. There will be a few feathers on the rump. I take the shears and cut the rump off. Some connoisseurs want the fatty rump left on for cooking flavor. It's a small point.

With your forefinger, poke a hole in the body cavity lining, your finger against the inside and lower part of the breast. When the hole opens, use your index and middle fingers to scrape out the innards. Wash the quail, inside and out. Purple-red blotches show where shot went in. Dig them out. They don't taste good, and they fracture your dental work.

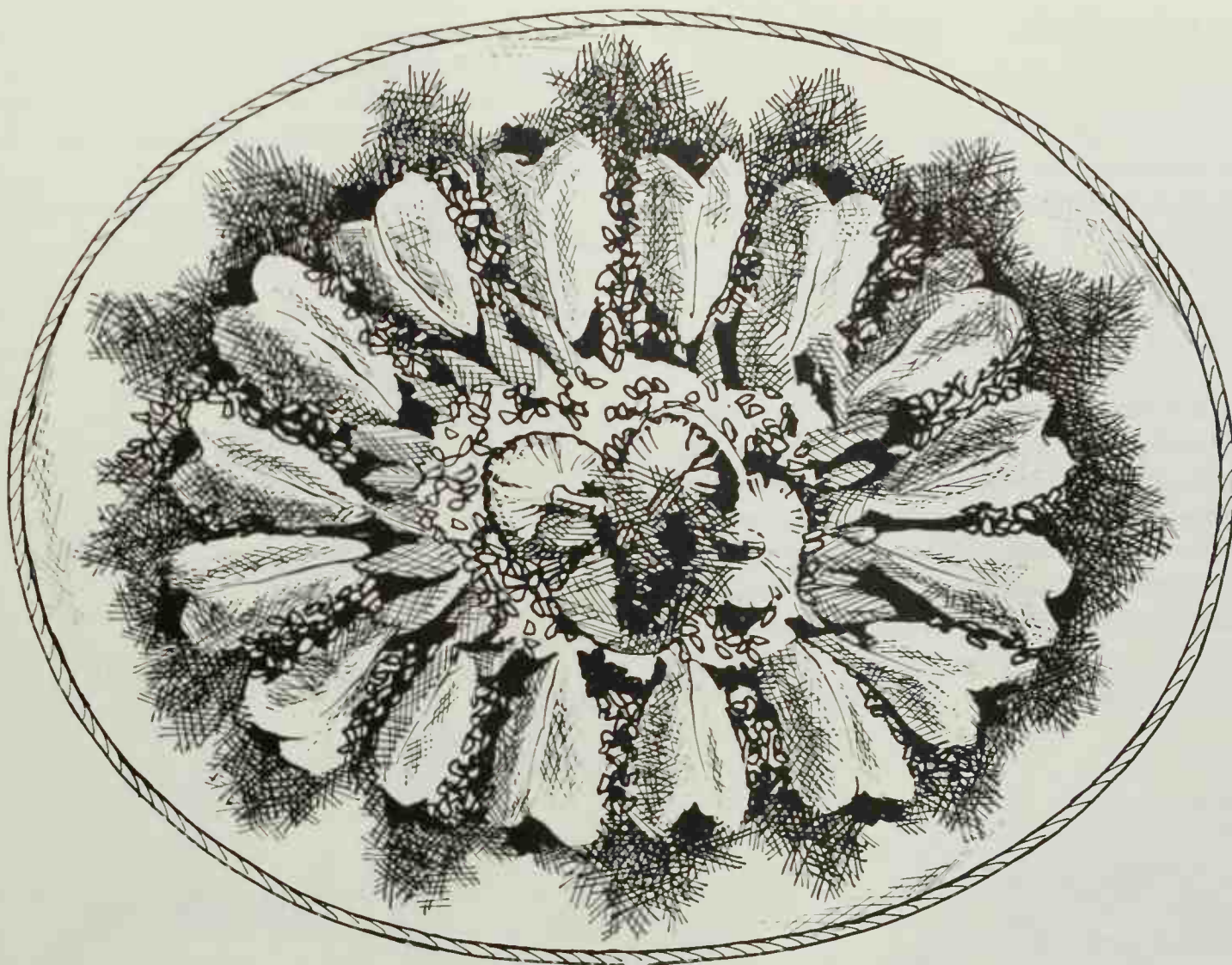
For frying, you may wish to cut the bird into sections. Cut the back legs off the backbone. Then snip to separate the legs. This leaves the breast. Cut lengthwise with your shears. By cutting into smaller pieces, you do not need as much grease in the pan. However, some deep-fry cooks only cut the backbone in two and cook the legs together and the whole breast.

If you plan to cook your dressed quail within two or three days, do not freeze. Simply wrap and put them in the refrigerator.

For freezing, you will find regular plastic freezing containers handy. Some hunters use one-gallon plastic milk containers, cutting out a section near the top but leaving the handle on.

I freeze four birds per twenty-four-ounce container and find this convenient later when planning a dinner. To freeze, simply put the dressed birds in a container, cover with water, put the lid on, and place in the freezer. Be certain that no parts of the birds are above the water, or they'll get freezer burn. Also be sure to label the container. I've thawed out dove when I had guests coming for quail.

Most cooking experts agree that you should not keep quail in the freezer more than a year. That's alright. You need to eat them to make room for next season's bag.



Quail Recipes

Quail are a dining delight for your family and can be a gourmet treat for your guests.

A problem in serving quail is that one bird is not enough for a hungry man, but two may be more than a lady wants. The hostess is never sure how many to cook. In the recipes which follow, she may wish to adjust the quantities listed.

Quail do not have a strong, gamey taste as do woodcock and some species of waterfowl. The breast is white and tender, not unlike that of a young chicken. There are two or three bites of darker meat on the legs, but the amount on the wings is negligible. As far as etiquette at the dining table, do the same that you would with chicken. Use your fingers for fried quail, but with the ones served with gravy, it may be necessary to use a knife and fork.

If you don't overcook the birds or let them dry

out, you'll find quail cooking is not only easy but gets you a lot of compliments.

Juvenile quail, birds born the past spring, are more tender than older ones. Young birds should be used for frying or sautéing. Adult quail need liquid and steam.

For stuffed or baked quail, the birds have a better table appearance if they are picked rather than skinned. Gourmet cooks and diners always prefer picked rather than skinned birds.

The following collection offers you a choice of simple recipes and others with which you can demonstrate your flare with wines and fancy ingredients. I have used the first four recipes, courtesy of the United States Brewers Association, for more than fifteen years. The others were tested by the culinary staff of *Southern Living* magazine.

Bunty's Brunch Quail

- 4 quail
- Salt and pepper
- All-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup water
- 6 small mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 4 buttered toast slices

Sprinkle birds inside and out with salt, pepper, and flour. Melt butter in a skillet; add birds and brown on all sides. Add water and mushrooms. Cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Add parsley; cover and cook 10 minutes longer or until tender. Serve on buttered toast with mushroom sauce in pan. Yield: 4 servings.

Quail with Green Grapes

- 4 quail
- Salt and pepper
- All-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup seedless grapes
- 2 tablespoons chopped hazelnuts
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4 buttered toast slices

Sprinkle quail inside and out with salt, pepper, and flour. Melt butter in a skillet; add birds and brown on all sides. Add water; cover and cook over low heat for 15 minutes or until tender. Add grapes and cook 3 minutes longer. Stir in nuts and lemon juice. Serve quail on buttered toast slices with sauce from pan. Yield: 4 servings.

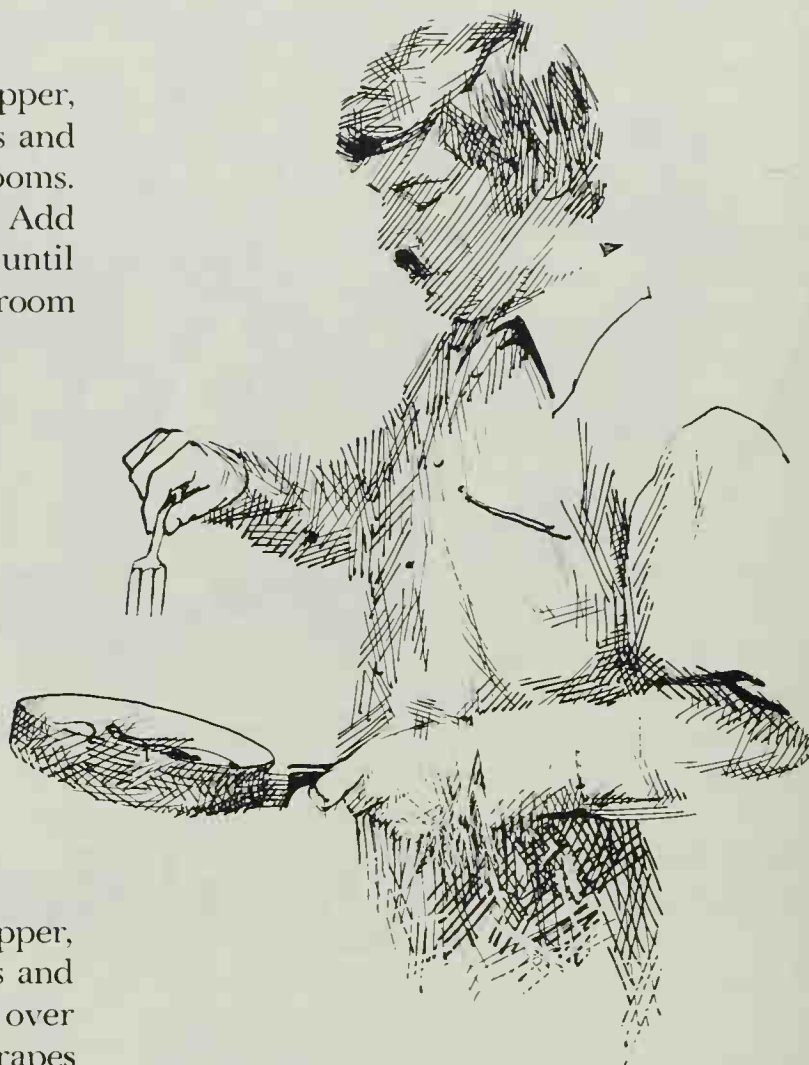
Charley's Braised Delight

- 8 quail
- Salt and pepper
- All-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup bacon drippings
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 (10 3/4-ounce) can cream of celery soup
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 teaspoon caraway seed

Sprinkle quail inside and out with salt, pepper, and flour. Heat bacon drippings in skillet; add

birds and brown on all sides. Add milk, soup, onion, and caraway seed. Bring to a boil. Cover and cook over low heat for 20 to 25 minutes or until tender, basting frequently with sauce in pan. Yield: 8 servings.

Note: For variety, substitute cream of mushroom soup for cream of celery soup.



Quail, Hunter's Style

- 8 quail
- Salt and pepper
- 4 cups shredded cabbage
- 6 slices cooked bacon, crumbled
- 16 cabbage leaves
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed tarragon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Sprinkle birds inside and out with salt and pepper. Combine shredded cabbage and bacon. Spoon 1/8 of the mixture into the cavity of each bird. Wrap each bird with 2 cabbage leaves and fasten with string. Place in a large skillet; add butter, chicken broth (canned or made with 1 chicken bouillon cube and 1 cup hot water), and remaining ingredients. Bring liquid to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes or until tender. Remove string and cabbage leaves. Serve with sauce from pan. Yield: 8 servings.

Smothered Quail

- 6 quail
- 6 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup sherry
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cooked rice

Prepare quail; brown in heavy skillet or Dutch oven in butter. Remove quail to baking dish. Add flour to butter in skillet and stir well. Slowly add chicken broth and sherry and salt and pepper to taste; blend well and pour over quail. Cover and bake at 350° for about 1 hour. Serve hot with cooked rice. Yield: 6 servings.

Roasted Quail with Mushrooms

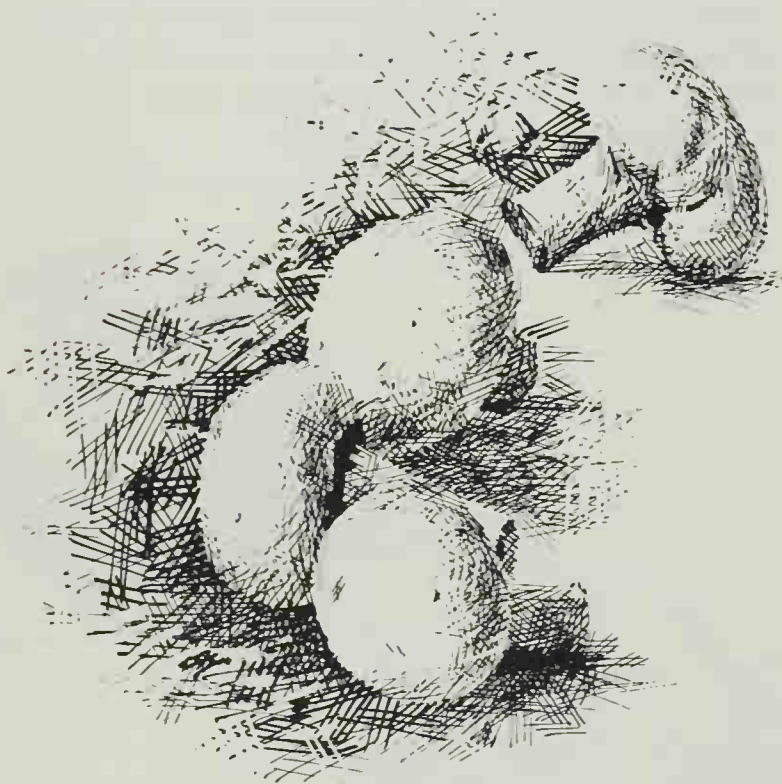
- 4 quail
- 4 slices bacon
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 1/3 cup chopped mushrooms
- Toast or rice and gravy

Prepare quail. Wrap bacon around each quail, securing with skewers or toothpicks. Put birds in a shallow buttered pan; cover and bake at 350° for about 30 minutes, basting with mixture of lemon juice and water. When birds are tender, remove from oven. Add mushrooms and heat. Serve on toast or rice with gravy. Yield: 4 servings.

Quail with White Wine

- 8 quail
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Cooked wild rice

Brown the quail in butter; remove and set aside. Sauté mushrooms and onion in butter. Place quail, mushrooms, and onion in a shallow pan and cover with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Bake at 350° for 1 hour. The last 15 minutes of cooking time, remove foil. Combine wine, lemon juice, salt, and pepper; baste quail often. Serve hot with wild rice. Yield: 8 servings.



Fried Quail

Place cleaned quail in solution of cold water and vinegar, using 1/2 cup vinegar to 1 gallon water. Let stand for several hours; wash in cold water several times and dry thoroughly. Season with salt and pepper and roll in flour. Fry in deep, hot fat until well browned on all sides. Add 1 cup hot water slowly, cover, and simmer over low heat for 1 hour or until pan is dry. Increase heat; cook until quail is crisp.

Stuffed Quail

- 1 1/2 pounds chicken livers
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 1/2 cups boiled wild rice
- 10 quail
- Sliced oranges
- Sliced onions
- Sliced celery
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups port

Saute livers, onion, pepper, and garlic in butter. Do not let the vegetables brown, but cook to a clear color. Add boiled wild rice to sautéed mixture for the stuffing. Stuff quail and then wrap each one in cheesecloth and completely cover with slices of oranges, onion, and celery. Pour the chicken broth over the quail and add wine. Bake at 375° for about 30 minutes. When quail are done, take cheesecloth off quail and there will be enough gravy to pour over the birds. Yield: 10 servings.

Hunters' Sautéed Quail

- 6 club rolls
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine, divided
- 6 quail, split
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Fruit Sauce

Split rolls in half and hollow out centers. Toast in a low oven (325°) until brown. Melt 1/4 cup butter and brush the rolls with the butter. Sauté the quail over high heat in the remaining 1/2 cup butter for 10 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle them with salt and pepper. Arrange quail on rolls and serve with Fruit Sauce. Yield: 6 servings.

Fruit Sauce

- 1 cup seedless white grapes
- 1 cup water
- 4 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup port
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped mushrooms
- 1/2 cup finely chopped hazelnuts

Bring grapes and water to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer for 5 minutes. Drain off water. Add butter, wine, cloves, and ginger. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in mushrooms and simmer for 5 minutes. Add hazelnuts (or filberts, as they are often called) and serve immediately. Yield: about 2 cups.



Quail à la Glenn

- 16 quail
- Salt and pepper
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine, divided
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- Country ham
- Cooked wild rice

Pick birds clean and wash thoroughly. Place on a rack in a roasting pan, breast side up. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and dot with butter. Pour enough water in pan to almost cover birds and then add remaining butter to pan. (Add water during cooking, if necessary, to maintain constant level.) Cover roaster and place in a 300° oven. Cook slowly until tender (about 2 1/2 hours). Brown dry flour in pan under broiler, stirring occasionally. Place browned flour in bowl and add enough water to make a creamy batter. Pour over birds and stir pan liquid gently to prevent tearing meat. Cook about 20 minutes longer, basting several times. Add butter to gravy if a richer flavor is desired. Serve quail on country ham with wild rice and cover with gravy from cooking pan. Yield: 16 servings.

Braised Quail with Bacon

- 6 quail
- 18 slices bacon
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 6 slices toast

Prepare quail for cooking and let stand overnight in refrigerator. The next day, cover quail with salted water, using 1 tablespoon salt for each quart water. Let stand for 15 minutes; drain and dry inside and out with a cloth.

Place 1 slice bacon in cavity of each bird and place in shallow roasting pan. Place slice of bacon over breast of each and a slice over the legs. Bake at 450° for 5 minutes; reduce heat to 350° and continue cooking for 40 minutes, basting frequently with a mixture of the butter and hot water. At the end of the baking time, sprinkle with flour, increase heat to 450°, and brown about 10 minutes. Serve on toast. Yield: 6 servings.

Baked Quail

- 6 quail
- Water
- 4 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Juice of 3 lemons
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard

Put quail in roasting pan with enough water to cover bottom of the pan. Cover and place in 300° oven. Combine other ingredients and blend together over low heat. When quail have cooked for 30 minutes, remove from oven, cover, and continue cooking 30 to 40 minutes longer, basting frequently. During the last 10 minutes of cooking time, remove cover to brown birds and thicken the sauce. Yield: 6 servings.

Coach Howard's Quail Pie

- 6 quail
- 2 cups water
- 3 cups self-rising flour
- 1 cup shortening
- Ice water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons melted butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- Milk

Cook quail in water in a pressure cooker for about 25 minutes. Make a pastry of 3 cups flour and shortening and just enough ice water to make a stiff dough. Roll out half the pastry to cover bottom of a large casserole dish. Remove quail from cooker and save the broth. Remove bones from quail and place meat in the casserole. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and pour melted butter evenly over the meat. Thicken broth with 2 tablespoons flour and pour over quail. Roll remaining pastry thin and cut into strips. All pastry strips should be well pricked. Place a few thin, pricked strips of pastry over the quail, bringing ends of strips to meet bottom pastry. Brush with milk and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Yield: 6 servings.

Quail with Wild Rice

- 10 quail
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 pounds chicken livers
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 1/2 cups cooked wild rice
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups port

Sew together body cavity of quail. Sauté in 1/2 cup butter until quail are browned. Place in baking dish. Cover and bake at 325° for about 30 minutes.

Sauté livers, onion, pepper, and garlic in 3/4 cup butter. Do not let vegetables brown, but cook to a clear color. Add cooked rice, chicken broth, and wine. Place mixture in a 3-quart baking dish; cover and bake at 325° for about 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Serve quail over rice. Yield: 8 to 10 servings.

Variation: Body cavity of quail may be sewed up and the quail lightly browned in butter and placed on top of the stuffing in a baking pan. Mix chicken broth and wine and pour over quail and stuffing. Cover pan and bake at 375° for about 30 minutes.

Smothered Baked Quail à la Rivers

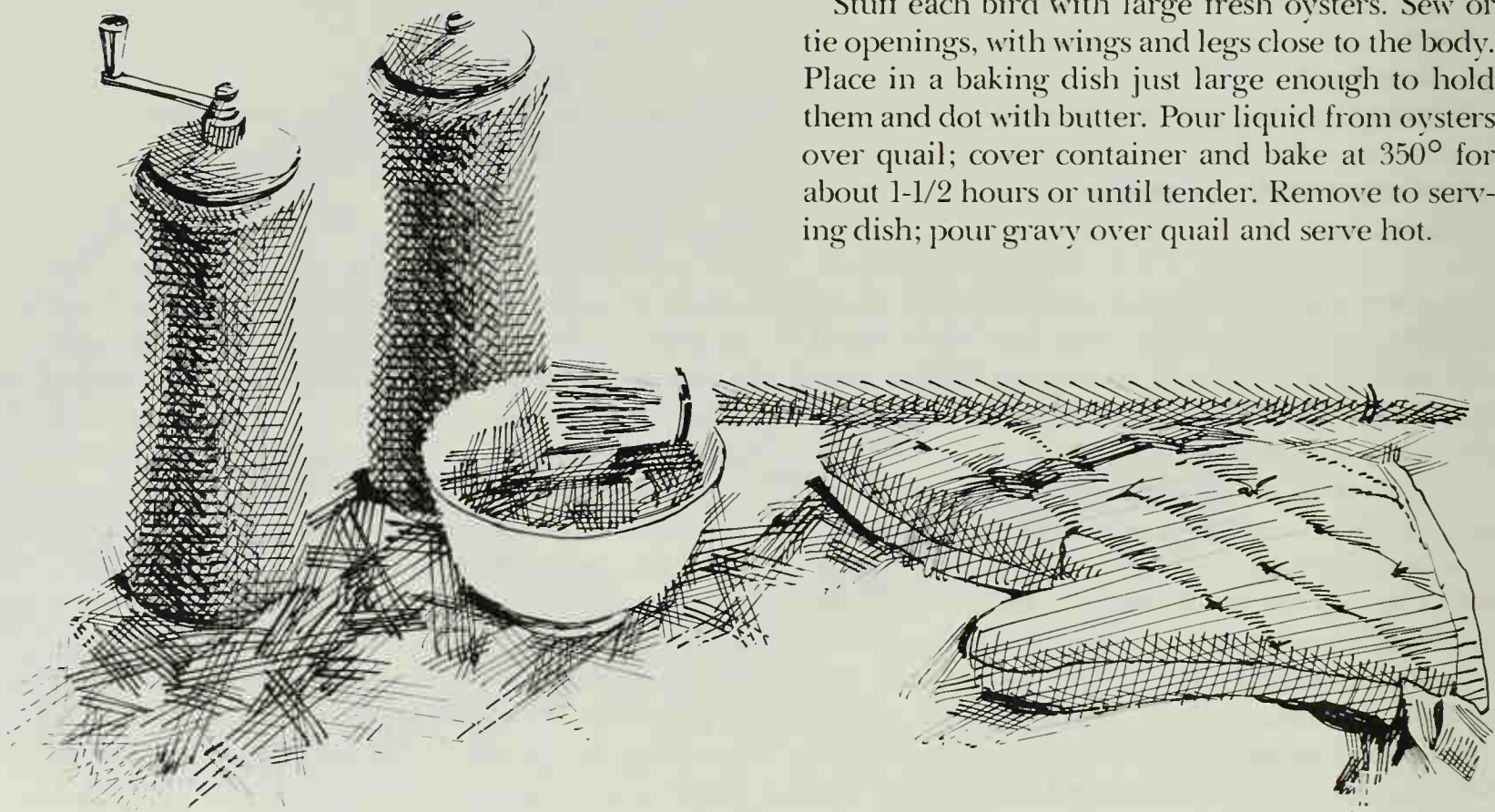
- 12 plump quail
- 6 tablespoons butter or margarine, divided
- 3 tablespoons salad oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Dash garlic salt for each bird
- 2 (4-ounce) cans sliced mushrooms, drained and liquid reserved
- 1 (8-ounce) can brown gravy
- Mushroom liquid plus 1/2 cup water
- Cooked wild rice

Wipe quail and rub each bird with butter. Put salad oil in a large oblong pan; place quail in pan and bake at 350°, uncovered, for about 25 minutes. When quail begin to get tender, remove and add the rest of the butter which has been melted, the salt, pepper, and garlic salt. Put pan under broiler, watching carefully until quail are browned. Remove from broiler and add sliced mushrooms, gravy, and liquid. Return to 350° oven and cook until tender, basting often. Add more salt and garlic salt if needed. Serve with cooked wild rice. Yield: 12 servings.

Stuffed Quail

Dress birds, open down the back, and refrigerate for 48 hours. Then salt and pepper inside and out.

Stuff each bird with large fresh oysters. Sew or tie openings, with wings and legs close to the body. Place in a baking dish just large enough to hold them and dot with butter. Pour liquid from oysters over quail; cover container and bake at 350° for about 1-1/2 hours or until tender. Remove to serving dish; pour gravy over quail and serve hot.



What is a Quail Hunter?*

Between a boy's first shotgun and a tottering old man we find a delightfully unpredictable creature called a quail hunter. Quail hunters come in assorted sizes, but all of them have the same creed: To enjoy every second of every minute of every hour of every hunting trip—and to violently protest when the sun sinks beneath the horizon and it gets too dark to hunt.

Quail hunters are found nearly everywhere—on steep ridges, bragging in offices, field trials, swamps, sporting goods stores, conservation meetings, Sunday schools, back rooms and at board meetings. Mothers love them, young girls hate them, older brothers and sisters tolerate them, the boss envies them, and Heaven protects them. A quail hunter is Truth with dirt on its face, Beauty with a briar scratch on its finger, Wisdom with Nature as its God, and the Hope of the future with good-will toward man.

When you are busy, a quail hunter is thinking of pointers, setters and country roads. When you want him to make a good impression on a client, he may talk only of the triple he once bagged, the way Ole Spot honors a point, the spring bird hatch or the prospects of his newest pup.

A quail hunter is a composite—he is content with “rat” cheese and crackers for lunch at a country store but his ulcer has to be pampered with a special diet when he's home; he will drink from any old well without question; he has the energy of a hurricane when he starts hunting although in the office it tires him to walk to the pay window; he has the lungs of a dictator when he yells at the dogs although his secretary complains that he whispers all the time; he has the imagination of a scientist as he looks for coveys along each likely edge; he shows the audacity of a steel trap as he tramps through green briars oblivious of the pain in his thighs; he has the enthusiasm of a firecracker as he beats every brush pile, and when the dogs do go on point, he has forgotten to load his gun.

He likes dirty hunting pants, old guns, hunting knives, leaky boots, long weekends, all kinds of field dogs, back roads, wool shirts, abandoned farms and questionable companions who also are

quail hunters. He is not much for social gatherings between Thanksgiving and March, stray cats, neckties, educational books, weekend company, barbers, people who post land, and clients who don't hunt. Without thought of race, creed or color, he likes people who hunt bobwhite quail three months a year and talk about it twelve.

Nobody else is so early to rise, or so late to supper—during the bird season. Nobody else gets so much fun out of chasing dogs, trampling honeysuckle, and getting mud on his feet. Nobody else suffers so silently with aching feet, twisted ankles and strained muscles. Nobody else can cram into one pocket a rusty knife, 17 No. 8 shells, an extra pack of smokes, a compass that doesn't work, six dog biscuits, change for lunch, a hunting license, waterproof matches, a crow call, a red handkerchief, last year's duck stamp, extra boot laces, a broken dog whistle, a snake-bite kit, and a bottle opener.

A quail hunter is a magical creature—you might get sore at his constant chatter about birds but you can't lock him out of your heart. You can assign him itineraries in the spring, but you know where he'll be in the fall. His sales chart will be as good as the next, but he'll get it there in his own sweet time. He may be the very one who sells the “rich old buzzard” who spends his winters quail hunting in Georgia.

You might as well give up—the quail hunter is a child of Nature with a hopeless one-track mind. He'll do his work with the best of them, but when December rolls around he's out in the field behind a young pup and an old veteran on the prowl for Mr. Bobwhite. He's earnest in his work but he's just a little more sincere when he's slow-trailing a jumpy covey.

And though you get sore at him in the winter, you know you'll always like him. There's something about him that rings true—he's almost too honest. He's a simple and kindly man who asks no more of life than that the birds fly fast, the dogs hold tight, and everything has a sporting chance to live or die.

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*Based on Alan Beck's “What Is A Boy?”

Appendix

The following is a list of state wildlife agencies in the main part of the bobwhite quail belt. Although one or two of the states may not have open hunting seasons for native quail, sportsmen may wish to contact them for information on improving habitat.

For a list of licensed game breeders, laws on rearing game or operating a shooting preserve, publications on quail management and related information, write to the chief of game management.

For information on public lands, a digest of current hunting regulations, subscribing to the agency's monthly magazine, and a list of audio-visual aids for sportsmen's groups, address your letter to the chief of information and education.

If you're not sure whom to address, it's okay to send your letter to the director. Sometimes you get a faster reply. The more specific you can be with questions, the sooner you will receive an answer.

Two other agencies which may have information on quail management are the Soil Conservation Service and Agricultural Extension Service for your state. Your county agricultural agent will be glad to put you in touch with them.

ALABAMA

Division of Game and Fish
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
64 North Union Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

ARKANSAS

Game and Fish Commission
Game and Fish Commission Building
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

CONNECTICUT

Department of Environmental Protection
State Office Building
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06115

DELAWARE

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
The Edward Tathall Building
Legislative Avenue and D. Street
Dover, Delaware 19901

FLORIDA

Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32304

GEORGIA

Game and Fish Division
Department of Natural Resources
270 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

ILLINOIS

Division of Wildlife Resources
Department of Conservation
State Office Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

INDIANA

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources
608 State Office Building
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

IOWA

Department of Fish and Game
State Conservation Commission
State Office Building
300 4th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

KANSAS

Forestry, Fish and Game Commission
Box 1028
Pratt, Kansas 67124

KENTUCKY

Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Capitol Plaza Tower
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

LOUISIANA

Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
400 Royal Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

MARYLAND

Wildlife Administration
Department of Natural Resources
Rowe Boulevard and Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

MASSACHUSETTS

Division of Fisheries and Game
Department of Natural Resources
Leverett Saltonstall Building
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02202

MISSISSIPPI

Game and Fish Commission
Robert E. Lee Office Building
239 North Lamar Street
P.O. Box 451
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

MISSOURI

Game Division
Department of Conservation
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

NEBRASKA

Terrestrial Wildlife
Game and Parks Commission
2200 North 33rd Street
P.O. Box 30370
Lincoln, Nebraska 68503

NEW JERSEY

Division of Fish, Game, and Shellfisheries
Department of Environmental Protection
Labor and Industry Building
Box 1390
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

NEW YORK

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Environmental Conservation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, New York 12201

NORTH CAROLINA

Wildlife Resources Commission
Albemarle Building
325 North Salisbury Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

OHIO

Division of Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources
Fountain Square
Columbus, Ohio 43224

OKLAHOMA

Game Division
Department of Wildlife Conservation
1801 North Lincoln Street
P.O. Box 53465
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

PENNSYLVANIA

Game Commission
P.O. Box 1567
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

RHODE ISLAND

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources
83 Park Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

SOUTH CAROLINA

Wildlife Resources Department
1015 Main Street
Box 167
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

TENNESSEE

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
P.O. Box 40747
Ellington Agricultural Center
Nashville, Tennessee 37220

TEXAS

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Parks and Wildlife Department
John H. Reagan Building
Austin, Texas 78701

VIRGINIA

Game Division
Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries
4010 West Broad Street
Box 11104
Richmond, Virginia 23230

WEST VIRGINIA

Division of Wildlife Resources
Department of Natural Resources
1800 Washington Street, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305



The only thing Charley Dickey loves more than the quail he hunts are the dogs he hunts them with. He is a rare man who has the gift of language to catch this ritual of affection so that it lives on paper. We don't have room here to list all the major outdoor publications for which Charley has written. We can list the ones he hasn't written for. There aren't any. He has worked for the Tennessee Department of Conservation, spent 12 years as a wildlife consultant on shooting preserves, and 7 years as a director of the National Shooting Sports Foundation. He currently makes his living as a freelance writer. Make no mistake. This book captures all the fun and madness of the pursuit of the bobwhite quail. But, in very precise terms, it offers the accomplished hunter, and the amateur, the benefit of Charley Dickey's generation of experience in training dogs, selecting guns, leasing land, hunting birds, and all the myriad complexities that face the urban-suburban hunter today. You will learn plenty. And you will enjoy the tone of Charley's writing: "My wife Bunty urges me to go hunting and fishing; says I'm not so cranky when I return. We have three kids in college, and two English setters, which I'm personally trying to educate, plus one psychotic cat." Good hunting.



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